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MIKE SHAYNE

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER, 1975
VOL. 37, NO. 3

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

DEATH CALLS THE PLAYS

By BRETT HALLIDAY

The last thing Shayne expected was attempted murder in his own garage before he had even been briefed on the assignment. The job—to keep Miami Dolphin rookie wide receiver in town and fit to play in the crucial league playoff. Merely finding the criminal, to say nothing of running him to earth, was to prove among the most deadly and difficult of the redheaded private eye's long list of cases involving great stakes and the aura of death.

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DEATH CALLS THE PLAYS

Dolphin rookie wide receiver is a tiger on the gridiron but a scared kid when the threatening phone calls start coming in. On the eve of the league playoff, it is up to Shayne to catch a killer before kick-off time.

by Brett Halliday

MIKE SHAYNE'S face was tight and hard, his brow corrugated, as he impatiently dialed the number. He jammed the phone between an ear and shoulder.

Fishing out a bent cigarette with his left hand, he held a book of matches in his right, bent a paper match against the book, fired it with a quick movement of thumb and lighted the cigarette as he listened to the ring of the phone at police headquarters. When the familiar voice answered, he said, "Shayne again, Murph."

Lieutenant Joe Murphy sighed. "Chief Gentry is still not in his office, Mike. Your number is on his desk. He'll spot it first thing he gets back. Okay?"

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"Right." Shayne's scowl deepened as he briefly contemplated. He glanced at his wrist watch. It was time he was on his way. He had forty minutes to make the nine p.m. meeting with the new client.

The private detective said, "Pull the number, Murph. I'm heading out of touch."

"Sure, Mike."

Somehow Lieutenant Joe Murphy sounded mildly relieved.

Shayne popped the phone together and snubbed out the fresh cigarette with quick jabs. Reflexively, he ran a thumb along the edge of the shoulder-harness strap, patted the holstered forty-five and slid into a rumpled suit coat.

He jammed on his hat and yanked the brim low over his hard gray eyes as he headed for the hotel-apartment door. Two wall switches doused the lamplight and subconsciously he listened for the click of the door lock going home behind him as he moved on long determined strides down the corridor toward the closed elevator doors.

He was fired up. It always was like that when he'd been fed a taunting bone. And that's all he had so far. A bare bone, with no meat. He had hoped Will Gentry, Miami police chief, might provide something tangible to chew on before the nine o'clock appointment.

But Gentry was hung someplace. Maybe on another case, maybe in a dinner powwow with the mayor, maybe at a Chamber of Commerce function. It was like that these days: a cop couldn't be just a cop today, he had to play politician too.

The redhead entered the elevator and punched the B button. He was alone. The elevator whisked him silently to the basement garage where he entered the vast, semi-shadowed area without looking to right or left.

Across the way, opposite the row of parked cars, a tiny brilliantly lighted glass cage was occupied by George, the Tuesday night garage attendant, who looked up from a magazine in idle curiosity and then flashed a wide grin as the redhead waved a perfunctory greeting.

Premonition hit Shayne while his arm was in the air. There was no sound, no movement, no warning smell. Just a sixth sense. It was as if he had been hit with an invisible electric cattle prod. In that same second he saw George stiffen, saw the attendant's eyes round in surprise.

Shayne whirled to his right, but not quite fast enough. The

movement from his left was swift, the flash of glistening steel too close. The flash moved down the detective's left arm in an arc, and was gone in a second.

Shayne's coat and shirt sleeve had been split, fallen away from the bare forearm. And the skin of that arm had parted as if opened by a razor edge. There was a sudden red thread of blood.

Shayne crouched, braced for a new attack. Opposite him, no more than two yards away, a small, wiry man with the face of a weasel and the body of a lizard bobbed and darted dangerously, hissing sounds coming from between yellowed teeth and out of hairy nostrils.

The assailant carried the knife down low now, gleaming blade tilted up from beside his kneecap, tip sparkling and dancing like a bright blip on a radar screen. The man's face was screwed down, mouth drooping to one side and open as he hissed, black eyes little more than florescent pinpoints of hostility.

Feet spread, knees bent, hands out front and wide, blood dripping from his sliced left arm, Shayne moved cautiously in a slow circle with the man as he groped for reasoning and sense of direction.

The detective recognized Dingo. He knew Dingo like he knew other Miami rats, but Dingo had a special reputation. He was low on mentality and long on cruelty, and an excellent knife man.

Question: Why had Dingo attacked?

Question: Who had put Dingo on him?

Dingo faked a slash from his knee. Shayne didn't bite. He continued to circle without flinching, eyes hard as cobalt as he measured the knife man. He could yank out the forty-five, end all of this with a slug between Dingo's beady eyes. But that would mean no answers to questions.

Dingo came in like a striking rattler. Shayne lifted a vicious dropkick, the kick designed to separate bone and muscle, maybe cave in a rib cage, sink a larynx, or cave in a stomach wall.

The detective summoned all of the strength he could muster and put it into the one wicked slash of foot, figuring he could recover with catlike instinct, pounce and subdue while the ferret groveled. It was reasonable thinking—but it did not take into account the garage floor oil slick.

Shayne's left foot skidded out from under him and he slammed down against the concrete. Bright lights exploded inside

his skull and his spine suddenly seemed tortured by the insertion of a million tiny needles. But he still had enough presence of mind to realize that a death shroud was falling on him.

He shoved up two stiff arms in desperation and his hands slammed against something solid. Briefly, the shroud's descent seemed halted.

Shayne shook his head. It helped. His eyes cleared enough to allow the fuzzy impression of having a man straddling his body. He felt the foreign weight on his chest.

And then his eyes cleared totally, suddenly, as if a wiper had whisked across a rain-splashed window. He knew that Dingo had him pinned, that the knife was in command, was plunging in a final gleaming slash toward Shayne's exposed throat.

But the blade did not find its mark. Dingo yelped. And with the yelp, his warped face lifted in complete surprise and his weight suddenly was gone from Shayne's chest. It was as if Dingo had been catapulted by an unknown force.

Shayne rolled up on his side, shook all over, focused. Dingo was six feet away, sprawled face down, legs and feet jerking, low inhuman sounds coming from him as he twitched. Shayne saw the knife on the concrete floor ten feet from Dingo's hand.

The detective pushed up on an elbow, shook his head again, and abruptly became conscious of another shadow hanging over him. He looked up.

George, the garage attendant, stood spread-legged and sweating not two feet away; and George looked like a giant. He carried a tire iron in one large fist and he was breathing as if he had just finished running a cross-country race.

"I—I bashed him, Mr. Shayne," George managed.

Shayne scrambled to Dingo. The knifer was inert.

Shayne fingered the back of Dingo's head. It was pliable as damp putty.

"I owe you one, George," he graveled.

"You don't owe me anything, Mr. Shayne. That boy was gonna kill you. Where'd he come from?"

"From between the cars."

"How'd he get in here without me seeing him?" George scratched his head, looking around the garage's precinct.

The question didn't get answered. A hiss of indrawn breath was a fresh warning. George whirled, tire iron high again. Shayne spun on his knee, hand moving inside his coat to the forty-five.

Then both froze and stared at the young girl. She stood framed in the open elevator door, eyes round and unblinking, lips puckered, cheeks hollowed. She was ghost white.

It was as if sudden sleep enfolded her. The girl's eyelids came down, she curled slightly and folded onto the floor without a sound.

II

MIAMI POLICE CHIEF Will Gentry was a stumpy, burly man with a bulldog face and a ravenous appetite for black cigar stubs. He also was the best cop in the United States, in the opinion of Mike Shayne, and a friend of long standing.

Shayne jerked the key from his apartment door, flipped a wall switch to produce light and sailed his hat toward the couch. He pounded through the bedroom into the bath where he stripped to the waist, turned on cold shower water and shoved his bloody arm under the stream.

From the bathroom doorway, Gentry said, "You'd better see a doc, Mike."

"Bull. It's only a slice. Nature will take care of it in a couple of days."

The basement business was finished. Dingo—barely alive—had been carted off by ambulance to a hospital and the young girl, a new resident of the building, had been revived from her faint. Dingo had been incapable of muttering a word, but the girl finally had found voice enough to tell her story.

She had been going out to a movie. She had come down in the elevator to get her car. But when the elevator door whisked open, she had encountered the most horrible thing she had ever seen in her life.

A large, redhaired man was being killed before her eyes!

The redheaded man was sprawled flat on his back on the

garage floor, a smaller man straddling his chest. And the smaller man was plunging a knife toward the redheaded man's neck. The only thing that had saved the redheaded man was the garage attendant, who had smashed the smaller man with some kind of stick.

"Dingo had me, Will," Shayne said from the shower. "Except for George."

Gentry took the black cigar stub from his mouth, looked at it. "George is clear in my book. But I'm curious about something. You had a weapon, Mike."

"I wanted to find out who sent him."

Gentry continued to stare at the cigar stub for a few seconds, then he jabbed it into a corner of his mouth as Shayne daubed his arm dry and covered the slice with a salve.

"Somebody out of your past?" Gentry speculated.

Shayne wrapped gauze around his arm. "Could be revenge? Maybe," he conceded.

"Or maybe things are already popping in the Dolphins' case. Did you take it?"

Shayne shot the chief a sharp glance. Gentry's stare was steady, didn't tell anything. Shayne turned his thoughts back to that afternoon, and the phone call he had received in his Flagler Street office. The caller had identified himself as Art Havemeyer, general manager of the Miami Dolphins, the professional football organization.

"Mike, we got another playoff problem."

One of Havemeyer's hotshot football players, a kid named Allie Hammer, was being threatened. Somebody didn't want Hammer playing football in the A.F.A. playoff for the Dolphins. The kid was scared, ready to bolt, while Havemeyer was uptight and about to come unglued. Hammer meant that much to the Dolphins.

"You want what from me?" Shayne had asked.

"Find this guy with the axe to grind," Havemeyer had snapped, "and bend the goddamn axe around his neck!"

"Are the police in?" the redhead asked.

"They've been in for a week. *Nothing!* Shayne, I gotta have action! One more threat and Allie's going to the moon to look for golf balls." The General Manager drew a breath, calmed slightly. "Look, Shayne, the top cop himself, Gentry, said I should go to you again. Not that you need it after the Super Bowl mess two years ago."

Havemeyer's plea had taken on stature.

Now Shayne continued to frown on Gentry. "I've been try-

ing to reach you all evening, Will. How come me?"

Gentry bit down hard on the cigar stub before he said, "It's like Havemeyer said, Mike. We've been nosing for a week. Zilch. And Havemeyer's the nervous type, an ulcer breeder. You know him from way back. He wants results, cost doesn't seem to matter.

"So I suggested he go to you again and a private look-around. For two reasons. I figured it might help calm him a little—and get him off our backs. He's been keeping our switchboard alive. Has even got the idea there isn't any other crime in the city."

Shayne slid into a fresh shirt, buttoned it, and glanced at his wrist watch. "I had a meeting with Art in his office ten minutes ago. He's supposed to have Hammer there."

He went to the phone in the front room, and dialed the number Havemeyer had left with him that afternoon. The General Manager snapped up the receiver on the first ring. "Allie?"

Shayne frowned. "Me, Mike Shayne."

"Oh—where the hell *are* you, man? Where's Allie?"

"I ran into a slight detour on my way over there," Shayne said, his frown deepening. "Hammer isn't there?"

"Worse maybe," Havemeyer groaned. "I think he's backed out, isn't going to show. And he promised this afternoon! I talked to him after I talked to you. He said he'd be here at nine sharp, hear what you had to offer. But now. . ."

Havemeyer let the words dangle for a moment, then continued, "I called Elroy Tass about twenty minutes ago. Tass and Allie share an apartment. Anyway, Tass said Allie got a call around eight o'clock and skidooed without a word. Tass is worried. So am I. Allie may have got another threat, panicked this time."

"Tass knows about the threats?"

"Why wouldn't he, man? Those two guys live together. More: they came into this organization together, and they're the only rookies we've got on the squad this year. They're buddies. Hell, why wouldn't they confide in each other?"

Shayne snapped, "I'll be in your office within the hour."

"Shayne—"

The detective put his phone together on Havemeyer's howl, then scowled at Gentry. "Hammer was supposed to make my meeting with Havemeyer, but he seems to have cut out. He could've had another threat."

Gentry pushed past Shayne

and used the phone. When he got an answer, he said, "What do you hear from Pearce?"

He listened, then muttered an oath and slammed the phone together. The cigar stub was tilted high when he faced Shayne. "I've had men tailing Hammer. Tonight it was Pearce. The kid come out of his place shortly after eight and shook Pearce. We're out of touch with him, Mike."

"How goosey *is* the kid, Will?"

"He's a time bomb. That's another reason I suggested you. Hammer seems to have an inborn dislike for cops. He's like an iceberg with us. We got a chip here, a chip there, that's it. About all he really told us was he's had some threats. I figured he might loosen with someone who isn't a cop."

"Is he scared?"

"Half-scared, half-mad. He wants to play ball. On the other hand, he's got a wild idea that by sticking he might be endangering some of the other players. He figures some wild man might take a pot shot at him during a game, miss, hit somebody else."

Shayne thumbed his jawline. "Is that such a wild idea?"

"It could happen, I suppose, but a guy'd have to be a nut to stand up in a football crowd and aim a high-powered rifle. Hell, the crowd would take him. It'd damn near be suicide," Gentry grunted.

"Un-huh," Shayne said thoughtfully. "Okay, what about these threats?"

"Telephone threats. Three of them. He got each at his apartment. First one was 'Get out of town.' That was Monday, a week ago yesterday. Second was "Your days are numbered, man.' He got that one last Wednesday night. Third was 'Bought your pine box yet, nigger?' That one was Friday night. Hammer swears the voice was the same each time."

"Demands?" Gentry looked puzzled, so Shayne added, "I mean like money, or throwing a game."

The Chief shook his head. "Nothing. Just the threats. No extortion, no—"

"Just somebody who doesn't want Allie Hammer playing football for the Dolphins."

"Natch, we're looking at the gamblers, Mike. The Dolphs need the league title to get back in the Super Bowl come January, and right now they're hotter than fire. Hammer is one of the keys, as you probably know. He's fresh, but a vital cog. Havemeyer doubts he could throw a game by himself, but he could drop a vital pass here and there.

"There's this business of no

demands, sure. No one's asked Hammer to drop a pass. But it still could be the fast money boys. Make the kid nervous. Maybe he gets too nervous to play. Or he plays. Trembling fingers do not make for good pass catching. So the difference in the final score is three points less, six less. Gamblers eat on point spreads, Mike."

"And?" Shayne frowned, knowing there was more.

"I've had people fanned out all over town for a week. The gamblers are smiling. Right now they like the Dolphins."

Shayne grunted, shrugged into the shoulder rig, put on a fresh suit coat and retrieved his hat. Riding down in the elevator, he said, "Dingo was waiting for me, Will—and Dingo isn't a household name."

"So what?" Gentry growled.

"So somebody had to know where to dig him out."

"Well, yeah."

"And Dingo could've been camped, just waiting for my next departure—or he could have been told I'd be going out tonight."

Gentry slid the redhead an oblique glance. "How many people would know about a meeting you set up by phone just this afternoon?"

Shayne yanked his ear. "Dingo is unrelated to the Dolphin thing?"

"I think you have to go that way for now, Mike."

They entered the basement garage. Across the way, George looked up quickly. He stood inside the glass cage. Shayne waved. George shuffled.

Gentry said, "He doesn't look convinced he's in the clear."

"So spread a little confidence on him, Will."

Shayne went on to his Buick and piloted it up out of the building on the north bank of the Miami River. He turned right, cruised through the area of small houses and hotels. His thoughts were far from the Second Avenue, Twelfth Street, area. He was preoccupied with Allie Hammer, football player, and an eight o'clock phone call. Had Hammer received another threat?

Hammer had gone out from his apartment.

Had he tumbled blindly into some kind of trap?

III

ART HAVEMEYER'S office at Dolphin headquarters was a spacious room, the appointments an incongruous mixture of expensive modernistic furniture and cheap, functional filing cabinets.

Havemeyer sat slumped in a chair behind a polished desk, one leg cocked on the corner of

the desk, a medium-statured, well-dressed man with a large nose and jerky mannerisms.

He snapped out of the chair and stood in expectation at Shayne's entry. Opposite him, a stocky man of forty who wore dark hair in a burr cut continued to fill a chair. He slowly looked up at the redhead.

"No Allie?" Havemeyer yelped.

"Where would *I* have him?" Shayne wanted to know.

Havemeyer waved his arms in a helpless gesture. "Hell, I was hoping. . .Never mind, never mind. You know Sam Tree? Guess you don't. Mike Shayne, Sam. Shayne's the detective. Sam's our head coach, Shayne."

Sam Tree had a flat face that featured high cheekbones. He looked trim and hard and like a man seldom out of command. His success as a football coach was renowned. He stood, grasped Shayne's hand in a quick, hard shake. "Hope you can do us some good, Shayne."

Shayne liked Sam Tree. He seemed a cool man under pressure. He could offset the hyperactive Havemeyer. "No word from or about Allie Hammer, I guess," said the detective.

"I called Tass again," Havemeyer burst. "Just hung up the phone when you came in. Nothing. Allie hasn't returned to the apartment, hasn't called."

"So maybe he's out walking 'round and 'round the block," said the redhead. "From what I hear about him, he's a frightened kid with plenty on his mind."

"Where'd you hear about him?" Havemeyer asked sharply.

"I just left Will Gentry."

"Oh."

Shayne looked at Sam Tree. As much success as Tree had had in football, it had to figure he was a man who understood people. "Capsule Hammer for me, Coach," said the redhead.

Tree looked briefly surprised, then he cocked his elbows on the arms of the chair and built a finger steeple under the thrust of his solid jaw.

"First, he *is* a kid—with football talent. He has speed and good hands. He could be in the league for ten, maybe fifteen years. He'll slow, sure, but by then he'll be crafty. Allie's that kind. He's got savvy. But right now—well, he's all youth and raw talent. He's twenty-two years of age and fresh off a campus. He came out of a Detroit ghetto and he had only one road out—football."

Tree paused, sat back. "We got him from Munroe State A&M. Small school, small football, but Allie is a big time

player. He's clean, he's quiet, and he's more afraid of success than knocks. Tangible knocks, that is. He can handle those. Success is something else. Success confuses him still. But now. . .

"Well, hell, I figure the boy is frightened, confused and frightened, Shayne. And that's a bad combination in my book. The confusion comes from sudden success—the fright comes from an invisible adversary, something that is belting him with flicking, stinging blows, then vanishing like fog.

The boy could handle a physical threat. He might get hurt, but he wouldn't be frightened. He'd battle. But these anonymous telephone threats, and then nothing?"

Tree shrugged abruptly, looked Shayne straight in the eye. "Allie Hammer can't cope with that kind of thing at the moment. Give him five years and, yeah, he'll cope, but not today."

"You an expert on anonymous phone calls, Coach?" Shayne asked.

Sam Tree's eyes narrowed for a moment before he grunted. "My dog is the only one in our house who gets upset these days. But then my dog gets upset when the President calls. My dog doesn't like the ringing of a telephone."

"How about Allie's calls?"

Tree frowned heavily, remained silent for a few seconds. "I don't like them, Shayne. Three in one week, that's pressing. Someone is on the boy hard."

"Any ideas?"

"None."

"What do you think, Havemeyer?" Shayne asked.

Havemeyer jerked. "The cops think they could be coming from the big money boys, the gamblers. They think—"

"I know what Gentry thinks," Shayne broke in. "What about you?"

"I—well. . ." Havemeyer suddenly threw his arms wide in

exasperation. "Hell, I don't know! Maybe—maybe it's somebody trying to ruin our ball club!"

Shayne looked at Sam Tree. The coach said, "You take any cog out of a smooth-operating machine and you're going to get a few clickety-clicks. But we've got replacement parts, and good ones. Ten days and the clicks would be gone. It'd be a matter of an adjustment here and there. Hell, I could lose Allie Hammer, anybody else, on the practice field, in a game, on a street, water skiing, fishing, riding a cycle.

"Shayne, I didn't have Allie Hammer two years ago and we won the Super Bowl. That's not saying I don't care today if I have him or if I don't. If I didn't care, we wouldn't have drafted him, he wouldn't be one of only two rookies we kept this year. Allie is important to us. In my opinion, he makes us just an inch or two better than we were a year ago. But we wouldn't cave in without him. Understand?"

Shayne yanked his ear.

"It's the boy," Tree continued. "What all of this is doing to him. He's a good boy, Shayne. I don't like what's happening to him. That's what really worries me. What will happen to him in the future if he bolts? Will he dive back into the ghetto, pull it in over him? He could, easily. Because he knows how to cope in the ghetto. It's the only familiar ground he does know."

"And maybe the safest place for him to be at the moment," said Shayne.

Tree squeezed down his eyes slowly.

"Allie got a death threat," said Shayne. "That third call, the one about a pine box. The first call—'Get out of town.' Shake him up, maybe, yeah, but he could live with it.

The second one—'Your days are numbered.' Sinister in a sense, perhaps, might make a man nervous. But you still could figure some nut has seen your name in the newspapers, found your phone number in the book. Then the third call—'Pine box' and—'nigger'. Somebody got damned personal on that one, gentlemen, maybe tipped his motivation. Do we want a redneck?"

"Oh, Christ!" muttered Havemeyer.

"That could mean tough hunting," Sam Tree said slowly.

"Maybe," said Shayne. "I need an address for Hammer and Tass."

Havemeyer yanked open a file drawer, thumbed cards, rattled a street address. "Apartment Three."

Shayne went to the office door, then looked back. "Either

of you guys ever heard of a man named Dingo?"

Havemeyer frowned. Tree shook his head. "No," they said in unison.

IV

THE APARTMENT was on the second floor of a new stucco building in a modestly-priced, quiet neighborhood. A wide-shouldered, smoothly-tapered black youth yanked open the apartment door to Mike Shayne's first buzz and stood filling the entry.

He stared in curious contemplation at the redhead. The youth was totally bald. His head glistened dully in the lamplight that came from behind him.

"Tass?" the redhead asked.

"Yeah, man?" Tass was curious—and obviously wary.

"Mike Shayne."

The rookie running sensation of the Miami Dolphins blinked, but did not move.

Shayne flashed a wallet card. Tass looked, stared at Shayne for another few seconds, then abruptly relaxed, stepped back and opened the door wide. "Okay, man."

Tass went across the front room of the modern apartment, dropped his large body heavily into a deep chair. He waved a meaty arm toward a couch.

"You know about me, huh?" said Shayne.

"I heard about you this afternoon," said Tass. "From Art. Mr. Havemeyer called Allie in, said you were going to help him. What in hell is going on, Shayne?"

"It's what I'm trying to put together, Tass. Allie's still out?"

"Yeah. Hasn't called or come back since he left."

"He get another threat tonight?" Shayne asked, lighting a cigarette.

"I don't know, man. He got a phone call about eight o'clock, then cut. He didn't look good. I tried to find out about the call but he waved me off and went flying."

There was a pause, which Mike Shayne broke. "You know about the meeting we were supposed to have in Art's office at nine tonight?"

"Yeah," Tass affirmed.

"Allie tells you everything, huh?"

Tass pulled his wide, flat nostrils. A leg that looked like a tree trunk bobbed. He looked Shayne straight in the eye.

"Man, let's you'n me get something straight right off. I'm a temperamental brother. I've got a low boiling point. I don't like fancy words, I don't like innuendos, insinuations, inflections in tone of voice. You got something to say, say it flat

out. Keep the words nice and simple, and you know where you can put the unspoken. We on the same wave length?"

"You and Allie," Shayne pressed.

"Close. We got this place. We share. We've been buddies since training camp back in July. We're rookies, the only two to survive. We pooled in July, we pool now."

"You and Allie against the rest of the squad?" Shayne eyed the lanky black.

"Naw. The Dolphins are a unit, man, and we're a part of that unit now. But we've got to stay sharp, me'n Allie, still kinda look out for one another. Nobody's got a cinch job, you know.

"It's like in any business. You wanna keep your job, you gotta stay sharp. You keep your eyes and your ears tuned along with drawing all you can from natural talent. Me'n Allie, we're no different than guys who have been with the Dolphs nine, ten years. They stay sharp, too. That's why they last. And all of the veterans have got buddies, too. Like I said, we're a unit."

"So you and Allie confide in each other."

"We confide."

"On the other hand, you don't know if Allie got another threat tonight."

Elroy Tass's hamlike leg danced a jig. "I *don't* know."

"Our meeting in Havemeyer's office at nine o'clock was important to Allie, Elroy," the detective pointed out.

"Yeah," Tass nodded, rubbing his bald head.

"Does he understand I've been hired to help him, that I'm a private eye. That I'm not a cop, that I have one goal—find out who's leaning on him?"

Tass bobbed his head. "He wants to figure you that way, man, but—well, he's a confused cat right now."

"And to help him I need to talk to him, find out what makes him tick, what makes—"

Tass interrupted flatly. "Whatever he was told on the phone must've been more important to him than meeting with you, Tree and Havemeyer."

"Or it scared him," said the redhead.

"Yeah." Tass continued to bob his bald head in thought; the meaty leg danced. "He's turned on okay. Give him just one little flick in the butt and he'll dive so deep back into Detroit nobody'll find him. *Ever!* Maybe he got that flick tonight. I dunno."

"He'd dive without packing a suitcase?"

"Haw," Tass said slowly. "He's got a couple of things he wouldn't leave behind. There's

his threads, for one. His clothes. He's hung up on the threads, man. And there's. . ."

Tass let the words drop. His leg quivered as if caught in a vibrator.

Shayne cocked. "*And?*" he pressed.

Tass looked him square in the eye. The black's face was smooth and blank, but Shayne knew that inside his head, the boy was weighing matters. Finally Tass said, "There's Wanda, his girl friend. He's hung up on her, too."

Shayne glanced at the closed doors behind Tass. "She's here?"

"Naw." Tass waved, the leg stopped jumping suddenly. He shifted in the chair. "She doesn't live here. She lives at home with her Mama and her Daddy. But she's got a few things here, back there in Allie's bedroom. Her guitar for one.

"Wanda wouldn't go anywhere without her guitar, so. . ." Tass shrugged. "Well, hell, put it together, man. Allie wouldn't cut without Wanda, and Wanda ain't gonna cut without her guitar."

Tass shifted in the chair again, sat forward suddenly, large thighs spread wide, elbows on the thighs, chin propped on two boulder fists. He looked trouble.

Shayne said, "I can't help if I'm half blind, fella. I need both eyes."

"Wanda's a whitey. Nice fox. I like her. But she *is* a whitey. Daddy's a doctor here in the city. Last name's Ray. He's medical, big cat at one of the hospitals. I don't know which one. Allie and Wanda met at a party months ago, clicked. They're on the same wave length, man. And they don't hide. They move around together. What they've got between them is no secret, but. . ."

Tass paused. "Well, hell, man, everybody mixes these days: black and white, brown and yellow, purple and green. It's the in thing, you know? But this is Florida, this is the *South,* and. . ."

Tass slapped his thigh, sat back. "Look, I'm a Dallas boy, never been north except to play football. Allie is Yankee. We don't think alike about some things. We were reared in different worlds."

Shayne smoked his cigarette in thought, sat rubbing a slab of jaw with a thumbnail. "Tass, what's Allie's thinking about the threats? He must have some theories about who's laying on him, why."

"Naw. He's nothing but confused."

"He isn't even speculating?" Shayne suggested.

"He doesn't know where to start."

"You got a theory?"

"I just gave it to you. The black and white thing. Plenty of folks still don't buy the black and white combination."

"You ever hear anybody lay on either of them?"

"Never," Tass said irritably.

"Either of them ever mention anyone giving them a bad time?"

"Nope."

"Wanda lives with her parents. Does Allie go to the house?" Shayne prodded.

"He's been out to her place, yeah. He's met Mama and Daddy. They know who he is."

"Maybe Allie got a call from Wanda tonight. Maybe something's come up between them, something you're not privy to."

"Could be, but I doubt it. If that call had been from Wanda, Allie would have said as much. He might not tell me *why* she called, but he probably would have had me call Coach, tell him to forget your powwow. He didn't say anything. He just put the phone together and cut like some ol' boy was coming after him with a razor. I yelled after him but he just kept going."

"You got a phone number for Wanda Ray?" Shayne asked.

"Phone book's in the stand at your elbow. Look under the flap, the number is written there. It ain't listed in the book."

Shayne found the number, memorized it, then dialed. He sat for several seconds, smoking and listening to rings. He did not get an answer. He snubbed out the cigarette and stood, heisted his trousers. Tass didn't move from the slumped position in the chair.

Shayne took a flyer. "Tass, you know anyone named Dingo?" he asked.

Tass looked mildly surprised. "Sure, man. I played ball with him at SMU. Offensive guard."

"D-i-n-g-o?" Shayne spelled.

"Naw, naw, man. Ralph Dinghold. Ding and then hold."

"Wrong guy," said Shayne, turning to the front door. "When Allie returns," he said from the doorway, "tell him to call me. Give me thirty minutes and I'll be at my place. And tell him I don't care if he calls at four-thirty in the morning. Got it?"

"Sure." Tass stood. "And Shayne—I've got one for you. Next time you come here, leave that heat you're wearing outside in a car or down a sewer. I don't tolerate guns in my place."

"Or?" Shayne said, cocking a shaggy brown.

"I'll have to run over you, man," Tass said softly.

Shayne figured Tass would

try. "You're observing," he said. "I'll remember that."

"When you spend Sunday afternoons trying to stay off your butt in front of eighty thousand roaring maniacs, it pays to be observing, man," Tass said, turning from the detective with a wave of hand.

IV

MIKE SHAYNE AWOKE at 8:30 on the brilliant Miami Wednesday morning. His sleep had not been interrupted, Allie Hammer had not phoned.

The redhead rolled from the bed with a scowl creasing his rugged face. He went into the front room and called Elroy Tass. Allie had not returned to the apartment, Tass was genuinely worried.

"I must've been wrong about the threads, man," he said. "The girl?"

"I don't think he'd leave town without her," Tass said slowly. "No, I'm not wrong about that part, Shayne."

"Well, he still could show," growled Shayne. "Have him call my office if he does. My secretary will know where to find me."

Shayne put the phone together. Had a threat been carried out? Had Allie Hammer been lured into a trap? The boy could be an easy mark.

Did the police have any unidentified bodies this morning? A black corpse found in an alley, on a roof, in a swamp, a motel room, crumpled in a stolen car?

Shayne dialed Will Gentry's special number at police headquarters. Gentry was in a sour mood. Tuesday night had not been a good night for cops. The single uncomplicated report had come from the morgue. Things were running normal in the morgue. All bodies identified, all causes of death immediately determined. No mysteries.

"Has your man Pearce reported in?" Shayne wanted to know.

"Yeah," growled Gentry. "The kid came out of the building, turned down the sidewalk on foot. He was hustling, seemed bent on his destination. Pearce was easing along in the car, no sweat. Then the kid hit an al-

ley. Instead of crossing, he bolted into it. By the time Pearce got the car in there, Hammer was gone."

"You figure it was precaution, or did he spot your man?" Shayne asked.

"He could've spotted Pearce, I suppose, but we've been playing a pretty good game of switcheroo on him, keeping the boys different. I've had a lot of men on him."

"Then you know his haunts?"

"Apartment to the practice field, back to the apartment. Went out two evenings, early. Returned to the apartment early. Met a white girl both nights. One night they huddled in a coffeehouse for a couple of hours, then split. The other they drove around the city in her car. No destination, just cruising.

"She brought him back to the apartment building that night. She drives a white Corvette, this year's model. It's registered to a Wanda Ray, daughter of Doctor and Mrs. C.T. Ray, city. He's a surgeon with a reputation, supposed to have magical fingers in the operating room."

"You had anyone watching her?"

"Hammer's our problem, not the girl," Gentry growled.

"Okay, what about Dingo?"

"Hanging on by a thread," Gentry grinned. "For a peaceable man, George sure hit hard."

Shayne grunted. Then, "Dingo still lives down in the Morgan area?"

"Still—but I'll save you a trip, Mike. We've already talked to Skin. Claims he hasn't seen Dingo in weeks."

"Dingo and Skin. Two pappas, same womb. Dingo's tunnel begins in the back room of Skin's bookstore, Will."

"So I've heard—but prove it!"

MICHAEL SHAYNE stopped at his Flagler Street office. Lucy Hamilton, his long-time secretary, was as bright as the morning outside until Shayne laid out the new case. Then she became seriously efficient.

"If Hammer should call, Angel, pinpoint him," Shayne said, lighting a fresh cigarette. He removed his hip from the corner of Lucy's desk. The cigarette dangled from the deep corner of his mouth and he talked around the curling smoke. "I'll be out of touch for a couple of hours. Try to call you 'round eleven."

"Right," said Lucy.

On his way into the shank of the city, Shayne stopped at a hardware store, purchased a cheap one-gallon gasoline can, then filled it with tap water in a backroom of the store. The clerk looked curious but sensed

an ominousness about the large redheaded customer and did not ask questions.

The bookstore Shayne wanted was in the middle of a block in a delapidated area that featured leaning buildings, littered streets and a segment of humanity that had succumbed or been driven to hapless, day-by-day existence. Tomorrows were like finding sudden riches. They were out there somewhere out of reach. Tomorrow never did materialize. There was only today.

Skin was alone in his filthy bookstore. Skin always seemed to be alone in his filthy bookstore. The books hadn't been dusted and the ancient cash register hadn't registered a legitimate sale all day. But Skin was there. Day and night.

And the ferrets were there, day and night, sliding in and out. A smattering of the ferrets could not read. Those who could, didn't. Reading skills had nothing to do with haggling over the price to be paid by Skin for a lifted watch, two wheels wrenched from a parked Lincoln, a housedress removed from a department store deep inside the bloomers of a fat woman.

Skin's trade wasn't exactly multi-million dollar. But he didn't worry about taxes, either.

Skin was worried that bright Wednesday morning, however. The large, rugged-looking redhaired man who loomed over him from the customer side of the counter didn't look like he was in any mood to haggle over the price of the obviously new gasoline can he had thudded on the counter.

The can brought fresh worry. Skin had heard the thud, recognized the sound. The can was filled with fluid. And now the redhead was taking a clean handkerchief from his pocket. The redhead removed the cap of the gas can, whirled the handkerchief into rope-like shape, then stuffed three quarters of the material down the hole of the can. The redhead removed a book of matches, lighted a match, held it near the edge of the exposed handkerchief.

"Shayne, what are you doing to me?" wailed Skin.

"Going to kill the cockroaches in this joint, Skin—and maybe burn up a little loot in the process. Haven't you heard? I quit the shamus business, joined the city Health Department."

"Shayne, I already told Gentry's boys! I ain't seen Dingo in months!" Skin insisted.

"You told Gentry's people weeks."

"Okay, weeks!" Skin shuffled nervously.

Shayne moved the match

closer to the handkerchief. "It'll smoulder for a while, give me a chance to get back in the bookshelves. You want to hit the sidewalk now, Skin? I don't want you to get trapped."

"Okay, okay," Skin wailed frantically. "Dingo got a call. I don't know who from. All I did was pass the message. Five bills—two down by boy messenger, three to come after—to scare you. I told Dingo. Honest. I told him Shayne don't scare. But all he did was grab."

"The two fish came by messenger boy?"

"Yeah!"

"The guy didn't want a meet with Dingo?"

"He said no meets," Skin insisted.

"So he was staying under a blanket."

"Yeah," Skin sounded relieved.

"Smells amateur, Skin. A pro hit—"

Skin jerked back. "It wasn't no hit, Shayne! God, no hit! Just a scare! That's all the guy wanted!"

"Dingo got a little carried away with his work, Skin."

Skin looked frightened. "I wouldn't know nothun 'bout that, Shayne," he mumbled.

"Who was the guy?"

"Man, I dunno! The phone rings! The guy wants Dingo! I play cozy at first, tell the guy I don't know no Dingo! Then he lays some heavy stuff on me, says he was in stir with Dingo, says Dingo once told him I'd always know where Dingo could be found.

"It ain't true, Shayne, but then the guy gets nasty, says he'll come to my store someday and stick toothpicks up my nose if I don't turn up Dingo pronto. That scared hell out of me, so I go digging. Got lucky, as it turned out. Happened to run into Dingo on a street corner."

"Un-huh," grunted Shayne from thought. "When did all of this take place, Skin?"

"About six last night!"

"Dingo did some tracking, didn't he?"

"Well, I guess the guy was in a hurry," Skin said gutterily, his eyes on the can.

"You had any more calls?"

"Christ no, and I don't want none!"

"I figured the guy might've called this morning to find out how fast I'm running," Shayne suggested.

"No more calls, Shayne. Honest!"

"But if you get one?"

"You'll be the first to know, shamus!"

"I'd like to believe that, Skin," Shayne said, holding the match flame to the edge of the handkerchief. Smoke curled up from the cloth. He turned and

walked out of the bookstore.

"*Shayne!*" Skin wailed.

VI

MIKE SHAYNE WALKED to a drug store and called Lucy Hamilton. She had not heard from Allie Hammer. He put the phone together and thumbed his jawline. Then he pulled another phone number from memory and dialed the C.T. Ray residence. A woman answered on the second ring.

Shayne asked for Wanda.

There was a brief silence before the woman said, "Wanda is not here. Who is this calling, please?"

"Is this Mrs. Ray?" Shayne asked.

"Yes."

"My name is Shayne, Mrs. Ray. I'm a private investigator. I'd like to talk to your daughter. Are you expecting her soon?"

"A private—" The woman chopped off the words. There was another silence.

Shayne attempted to hustle things along: "I phoned last evening, but—"

"Doctor and I were out last evening, Mr. Shayne," the woman interrupted quickly. "So was Wanda. That is, she was here early in the evening, we all were, then. . ."

Again Mrs. Ray cut off the words, and Shayne had the impression she was fumbling now to say the right thing.

Suddenly she burst, "Mr. Shayne, what's *happened* to our daughter? Why are *you*, a private investigator, calling for her?"

Shayne had put little tidbits of conversation together. He asked, "When did Wanda go out last evening, Mrs. Ray?"

"Around eight-thirty. She received a phone call and she left the house immediately. Doctor and I were a bit disturbed because she walked out without a word, but. . .

"Mr. Shayne, you didn't answer my question! Why are you—"

Shayne interrupted again: "Have you seen Wanda since?"

"No!"

"Did she pack a travel bag?"

"My Lord—*no!*" Mrs. Ray sounded genuinely startled at the idea.

Allie Hammer had received a phone call around eight o'clock, then had walked out of his apartment without saying anything to Elroy Tass. Wanda Ray had received a phone call around eight-thirty, walked out of the house without a word to her parents.

Shayne figured he could eliminate the speculation of Allie's call coming from Wanda. But had Wanda's call been from

Allie, or had someone lured both kids?

He didn't like the tight feeling he had in his gut. "I'll be in touch, Mrs. Ray."

He knew he had left the woman dangling, but it couldn't be helped. The hell of it was, he was dangling, too. He didn't know anything, didn't have his fingers into anything solid.

All he had was odds and ends of some recent happenings: telephoned threats to a football player, worried Dolphins' management, a busy cop who had tossed him a bone, two kids who might have been lured into some kind of trap, might be missing.

Or could the kids have set up all of this merely to camouflage a disappearing act? Hell, all anybody had about the so-called threats was the word of Allie Hammer.

But why would they need to camouflage?

And there was Dingo. Did the knife man fit? Dingo's attack still could be totally unrelated to Allie Hammer-Wanda Ray.

Shayne phoned Elroy Tass.

"Allie's here, man!" the big halfback burst. "I knew he wouldn't cut without the threads! He's packin' a bag now! Sam Tree's here, too, but all he's doin' is banging his skull against the wall!"

Shayne broke Miami speed limits getting to the apartment and parked the Buick behind a white Corvette at the curbing. He found Elroy Tass slumped in a deep chair and looking resigned. Sam Tree stood spread-legged and staring out a window. Tree looked as if he was engaged in an inner battle, caught between frustration and the anger it had produced.

Both men looked at the redhead as he entered the apartment. Neither spoke. Tree's mouth tightened and he turned back to his window. Tass thumbed an open doorway over his bald head.

Shayne tipped his hat back and entered the bedroom. Allie Hammer was supple, tall, the height making his width and weight deceiving. He was brown-black with a youthful face and extremely long fingers. There was an open suitcase on the bed. It was packed. The suit bag beside it was empty.

"Mike Shayne," said the detective.

"Oh?" Allie Hammer inventoried, then shrugged and went to a closet where he began thumbing through the hanging clothing.

Shayne kicked the bedroom door shut behind him.

Hammer whirled with the sudden loud sound. His brown face remained blank but his eyes were wary and his body

was cocked as if to ward off attack.

"You want to fly, boy?" Shayne said savagely. "*Fly*! I don't give a damn. But if you've got the guts to stick, if you want to play football, then I'm here to help. And I'm no goddamn rookie in my racket!"

The youth flushed and took a step toward the detective. Then he hesitated.

Shayne balanced himself, turned on a cold, one-sided slash of mouth that might have been miscontrued as a grin. But Allie Hammer knew better. The slash was no grin. It was a taunt.

He took another step toward the detective, hesitated. He stared hard.

"Take it, Allie," Shayne graveled. "The help—or the hard road. No second chances."

The boy stood rooted for a long time. Suddenly he turned to the bed and sat on the edge. "Oh, Christ!" he mumbled, head down and wagging. "What the devil am I supposed to do, Shayne?"

"Depends," said the redhead, easing and lighting a cigarette. First battle won. He pulled smoke deep into his lungs and exhaled through his nostrils. "Wanda okay?"

"Yeah." Hammer nodded without looking up.

"That her car out front?"

"I'm using it." Hammer nodded.

"Where is she?"

"At a motel."

"You two cutting?" Shayne's voice was cold.

Hammer remained silent for a moment, took a breath. "I got another call last night. This time the bastard threatened Wanda," he said quietly. "The man told me, 'Get out of town, boy—or maybe you don't care about the girl?' "

"So you hotfoot it out of here, went down the street and phoned her, set up a place to meet."

"Yeah," Hammer's tone was defensive.

"That was a cop you ducked when you dived into the alley," Shayne informed the ballplayer.

Hammer looked mildly surprised. "I didn't know. All I know is, I was sailing along and I suddenly had this feeling that I wasn't alone. I took a couple of looks around, didn't see anything, but that didn't mean nothing. I've got a sense about people moving in on me, Shayne. I can *feel* 'em."

"You mean like when you're about to catch a pass?" Shayne asked.

"Maybe that's where it comes from. I dunno. All I know is I've got this sense."

"How about Wanda? She got

the sense too?" Shayne asked suddenly.

Hammer looked puzzled.

"A guy calls, hands you a threat about her. Wouldn't it figure he'd know where she lives?"

Hammer looked relieved. "Sure it'd figure, Shayne. That's why she picked me up on a street corner. I wheeled around until I was positive no one was on us."

"And then picked a motel," Shayne said.

"Un-huh."

"What are you going to do when you leave here this morning?" The question was like a knife thrust.

"*Huh*?" Hammer physically pulled back.

Shayne drew on the cigarette. "Somebody knows the girl, Allie. Probably knows she drives a white Corvette. The cops know. Hell, white Corvettes aren't exactly red Pintos when it comes to numbers on the street.

"So you shake a guy for a night. Big deal. You've got the Corvette parked out front right now. You were going to walk out of here with a suitcase in one hand and a suit bag in the other, drive away. No one on your tail, huh?"

"So somebody tails me. So? I'm leaving town, like the man says."

"That's what you want to do?"

"Hell, no—but these calls are driving me up the wall, Shayne. And now Wanda is—"

"You got the girl tucked in nice and safe?" Shayne interrupted.

Hammer's eyes narrowed. "Yeah. Nobody knows where she is."

"But you're going to tell me."

"Am I?"

"You are if you want to help me get this dude off your back. You got the stomach?"

Hammer almost snarled, "Show me the guy, Shayne, and I won't need you. You find him for me and I'll take care of the rest."

VII

MIKE SHAYNE stared and then grunted. He walked to the bath door and fired the cigarette butt into the stool. "First things first, Allie. You got any ideas about who we want? I'll take guesses, anything. I'll even take your buddy out there in the front room."

"Tass?" Hammer looked surprised.

"It's the way we have to play this," said the detective. "It's strictly a wild hand right now. Unless you've got something concrete that points to someone, something you might not have

told Sam Tree, Havemeyer or the cops."

"No, no," said the youth, shaking his head. "I haven't the foggiest idea about who it might be. If I did, I would have gone after the guy myself. But Tass? I don't understand your thinking, Shayne."

"He's a place to begin," said Shayne gruffly, using the thumb and forefinger of his right hand to worry the lobe of his left ear. "He's close to you, knows your friends, your habits. He knows when you're going to be here in the apartment, when you're not."

"But each time I got a call Elroy was sitting right out there in the front room!"

"So what?" snorted Shayne. "He could have another buddy someplace. He doesn't have to be a loner. Maybe he's made a point of being here when the calls come in.

"Suppose you had crossed him up one of those nights, didn't come back here from practice, or went out early one evening? Suppose you weren't here when the call came in. Tass could tell his friend when to try again."

"Shayne," Hammer said, wagging his head, "you think wild."

"It's called speculation, Allie," the detective said grimly. "I live on it about three-

quarters of my life. I'm not saying Tass is our man. I'm just saying we don't scratch him or anyone else. Not in the beginning. Now, take it from there. Any fresh ideas about who might be laying on you?"

"Under your terms, Shayne," the boy breathed, "it could be anyone I know."

"Right," nodded the detective. "The cops are working on the theory these threats might be tied to bigtime gambling. You ever been approached anywhere by anyone who even hinted about trying to change the outcome of a game?"

"No." Hammer shook his head vigorously.

"Then is the caller's beef personal?"

Hammer shrugged. "I don't know."

"Maybe you're getting them because of the girl."

Hammer's look was from suddenly narrowed eyes. "You've been listening to Elroy."

"I always listen, Allie."

"Elroy and I think differently about some things, Shayne."

"Yeah, so he says," grunted the detective.

"Black and white is one of them. Times have changed. Anyway—it wouldn't make any difference if times hadn't changed."

"Marriage, as an institution, has been on a greased slide, too, Allie, but that doesn't mean there aren't a few people with old convictions still walking the streets," Shayne pointed out.

"Okay," said the youth with a vague wave, "so someone doesn't like me'n Wanda as a combination."

"We keep everything a possibility." The redhead nodded grimly. "All right, let's go to work." He went to the closed door, yanked it open. "Tree, come in here."

The coach looked mildly startled and Elroy Tass twisted in his deep chair, staring at Shayne.

"Come on, man—come *on*!" Shayne said impatiently.

Sam Tree entered the bedroom. His eyes flashed between the detective and Allie Hammer, briefly took in the packed suitcase.

Shayne closed the door, shutting out Tass. "You need Allie in next Sunday's game?" the detective asked.

Tree looked startled. "Hell, yes."

"I don't want him playing, and I want it announced in the papers today," Shayne said. "Can you take care of that?"

"Shayne—" Tree moaned and shook his head.

"This is my ball game, Tree," Shayne pointed out savagely. "Football *you* know. Cat and mouse *I* know. And we're playing cat and mouse. Right now I'm working on the theory someone doesn't want your boy Hammer playing football for the Dolphins.

"Okay, you take him out of Sunday's game—and maybe that takes the heat off for a few days. Maybe it means no more phone calls, maybe it makes the caller think he's won *his* game. If nothing else, maybe it puts the caller off balance. And while he's reorganizing I'll be doing some digging. What I'm doing, Tree, is buying some time."

"At Dolphins' expense," Sam Tree said sourly.

"I figure, Tree, you'd better take a look at the long-range

investment—or are you the caller?"

Tree stiffened, stared hard at Shayne, his eyes mirroring disbelief.

"Nobody's above suspicion in my book," said the detective. "Is Allie in or out Sunday?"

Sam Tree muttered an oath and smashed a huge fist against a flat palm. Then he seemed to go into deep thought. "Okay, Potter will do all right against Oakland. They've got a veteran secondary, no kids with a little extra speed and dare, just a bunch of cagy boys back there, and Potter is cagy, too. He's been around eight seasons. It will be a contest of wits.

"Max will do all right at that. He'll lose one or two, but he'll also win one or two. Okay, Shayne, Max gets the go, Sunday. You got a pulled hamstring, Allie. Start limping."

"What if Max gets hurt?" Shayne asked.

Sam Tree shrugged. "We got Hoss Krispy still gathering bench splinters. He's been around long enough to know the whole book. He'll catch his share, keep us in it."

"You can split, Tree." Shayne nodded. "Allie isn't leaving town."

Sam Tree hesitated, then clamped his lips and turned out of the bedroom. Shayne pushed the door shut behind him. Allie Hammer stared. "*Wheee*!" breathed the black youth. "That's the first time I've seen Coach *take* an order."

"Where's the girl, Allie?" Shayne asked bluntly.

Hammer said, "The Blue Moon. Unit Nine. North on Biscayne, way out. Then to the right on Morningside, toward the water."

"So let's roll," Shayne said.

"We're going *there*?"

"No. I'm leaving the building. You're going to give me five minutes, then you're going outside and drive away in the Corvette. Drive a couple of miles—I don't care where—then stop someplace and call Wanda. Tell her about me, describe me physically so she'll know me."

"I don't get it, Shayne."

"All you have to do is roll, Allie, make the call—and then stay the hell away from the Blue Moon. Okay? Come back here. Stick. I may want to find you fast later this afternoon."

Allie Hammer sat for several seconds, then stood.

"And don't forget to limp." Shayne grinned suddenly.

VIII

A LANKY FIGURE came out a back door of the building and moved swiftly down the alley to the entrance. From this vantage, Mike Shayne could see an

empty parking slot at the curbing, then his Buick and the white Corvette in front of it. No signs of danger.

He grunted. It figured. A shadow would be behind the Corvette, but down the street somewhere. The shadow wouldn't want to be too close.

The detective lighted a cigarette and waited. Finally Allie Hammer came from the apartment building and got into the Corvette, drove away with a roar of motor and a snap of gears. Shayne pitched the cigarette and waited tensely. A small, black sedan shot across the alley entrance and settled in behind the Corvette.

Shayne bolted, vaulted into the Buick and moved out into the traffic lane with a screech of tires. Allie Hammer's speed in the Corvette forced him to roll faster than he liked.

He finally was able to ease into the traffic lane, two cars behind the black sedan. The driver was alone in the sedan and he had been able to maneuver himself into a position two cars behind Allie Hammer in the Corvette.

Hammer rolled straight down the boulevard for a little more than a mile, then suddenly swung into a left turn lane and stopped. The black sedan was behind the Corvette.

Shayne sat in his Buick behind the sedan. He saw the driver of the sedan light a cigarette. He lighted a cigarette. The light gave them an arrow. They curved left like a tricorn lovebird. Shayne felt totally exposed.

He moved into the right lane and shot past the sedan and the Corvette. He rolled for four blocks, catching green traffic lights and then he saw a bar ahead with parking slots at the curbing. He turned into one of the spots and parked.

He was on the sidewalk and moving toward the bar when Allie Hammer turned the Corvette around the corner ahead and disappeared. The black sedan disappeared behind Allie.

Shayne lengthened his strides. If the boy was sharp, if Allie Hammer really had the sense of awareness he claimed to have, the first real tangible spike in this case was about to be pounded.

Shayne moved past the bar entrance and around the corner. His blood churned as he saw Allie Hammer on foot and moving swiftly toward him. They passed without a word or sign of recognition. But Hammer looked worried.

The man who had left the black sedan was slight and wore a discount-store blue suit. A hat was set square on his head. He made a pretense of

locking the sidewalk door of the sedan, and then he turned toward Shayne and moved along at a quick pace. He did not seem to take in the detective but Shayne knew he had been scrutinized. He could not decipher the man's reaction.

As the man and Shayne came abreast, the detective moved his left hand up swiftly and clutched the front of the man's coat. If the guy was wearing a shoulder rig, he was blocked.

Shayne waltzed the man toward the curbing and bent him back across the hood of a parked car. He was conscious of Allie Hammer streaking down the sidewalk behind him. Out of the corner of his eye, the redhead saw Hammer dive into the white Corvette and speed away, tires squealing, the Corvette fishtailing.

The man in Shayne's clutch pawed the detective's wrist. He was surprisingly wiry. He squirmed and twisted. Then suddenly he went flaccid and stared up at Shayne, mouth tight, eyes mirroring discust.

"The chief is gonna love you for this, Shayne," he growled.

Shayne released the man and stepped back. There was a twinge in his left arm. He wondered if he had reopened the knife slash.

The man pushed from the car, jerked his suitcoat, looked down the street. The Corvette was out of sight.

"Pearce?" Shayne snapped.

"Jensen," the man said with the suggestion of a sneer. "What's with you? You know what you just did? I hope Gentry yanks your goddamn license!"

"Cool it, Jensen. Somebody is leaning on that kid—and I don't see C-O-P stamped on your forehead."

"Great!" growled Jensen. "I'll bet Gentry is gonna run right out and buy stamp pads!"

Shayne stabbed a stiff forefinger against the police detective's chest. "Tell Gentry I've got the kid under control. He can pull off you dogs."

Shayne pounded along the sidewalk to the Buick. A gamble had backfired. But it had been a fifty-fifty proposition from the beginning. If a man wanted Allie Hammer, but didn't have him in sight, then the logical place to watch was where Allie Hammer lived. So it had been fifty-fifty that if Allie was tailed when he drove away in the Corvette, the tail could be cop or caller.

Bang. Backfire. The tail had been a cop. Gentry would be unhappy.

But he'd get glad again, in the same pants he'd got mad in.

Shayne piloted his Buick into a lush Miami residential area

where the streets curved, the palm trees were trimmed, the grass sparkled, and Cuban aliens—in the United States illegally—could find refuge for a few weeks as long as they were good yardmen. No one in this neighborhood asked yardmen too many questions if they came cheap.

The Ray house sparkled. There was a four-car garage hooked to one end of the house. Shayne parked his car beside a low, red Lotus that was braked outside the garage. He sat for a moment and took in the four cars in the stalls. Did the Lotus mean the Rays had company?

The detective went to the front door. It was opened before he punched the buzzer. The woman in the entry cocked her head in curiosity. She was short and fifty and could have been attractive. She wasn't today. There were fatigue lines in her face and worry filmed light blue eyes.

"I'm Mike Shayne. I want to—"

"Oh," interrupted the woman with a jerk. "You're here about Wanda. I just talked to you on the phone a short—"

"She's okay, Mrs. Ray."

"You've seen her?" The woman turned, called over her shoulder, "*Cecil*? Come here, Cecil! Mr. Shayne says—"

"I heard him, Lucille," said an anxious male voice from behind her.

The man who appeared behind her was tall and thin. He had a narrow head and a penetrating stare. He, too, probably had not slept in hours, but he wore fatigue well.

"Come in, Shayne," he said. It was a guarded welcome.

The detective was ushered into a large front room where the Ray wealth was quietly obvious. Lucille Ray stopped at a coffee table, lighted a cigarette with fingers that trembled. She turned and sat quickly on the edge of a heavy couch.

Across the room, a large, haughty-looking girl turned from French doors and stared at Shayne in minute inventory. She looked to be in her late twenties. She had dark hair, worn long, a round face, a much rounded chest and round bottom.

"Our eldest daughter, Sara," said Dr. Ray.

The girl snapped a nod, remained silent, went to a winged chair and sat with a flash of crossed legs. The round face remained blank, the eyes remained curious Shayne had the impression the girl was a time bomb with a lighted fuse. She seemed to be waiting for something.

Doctor Ray said, "We don't understand how you know

about us, our daughter, Wanda, Mr. Shayne. We've been mulling it since your phone call and—"

"I've been hired to do some investigative work on behalf of Allie Hammer," Shayne informed them simply.

"Oh?" The doctor arched an eyebrow high.

"You know Hammer, I understand."

"Naturally. Allie and Wanda have an interest in each other."

"Do you and Mrs. Ray approve of this interest?"

The doctor squeezed down his eyes against the bluntness, pinched his lower lip as he took a moment before replying.

"Our daughter is a physically, mentally and emotionally healthy young lady in her twenty-second year," he said. His tone was soft, yet held sharp edges. "Over those years she has had many friends. Some we have preferred over others, but that is where it ends."

"Where does Allie Hammer fit on that scale, doctor?"

He drew a breath, colored slightly. "He is Wanda's friend." The voice was flat.

Shayne shot a glance at Mrs. Ray. She sat rigid on the edge of the couch, half profiled, the cigarette in the quivering fingers halfway to her mouth. Her lips were tight and her penciled brows were drawn together. The detective wished he had the power to see inside her skull, to know what she was thinking. Her expression and posture told him only that she was cooking under inner pressure.

He flicked a look at Sara Ray. She was bent forward slightly out of the chair, busy lighting a cigarette. It was as if no one else was in the room.

"Mr. Shayne," Doctor Ray said, his tone remaining cold, "I believe you told my wife you have seen Wanda—"

"No," said the redhead, shaking his head. "I didn't say that. Your wife jumped to a conclusion. But I do know where your daughter is."

"Where?" The doctor's tone was sharp with anxiety.

Shayne continued to shake his head. "I can't tell you. I'd be breaking a confidence. But your daughter is okay, doctor. She'll be here by nightfall. I'll see to that."

"Good Lord, Shayne, you sound as if she's in hiding!"

"Let's say she is out of sight at the moment." Shayne pulled a breath, yanked his ear. "Look, doctor, Allie Hammer has been told to get out of town and it's scared him. He's on the verge of flying, your daughter with him. I've been hired by the Dolphins' management to

find out who's leaning on the boy. The Dolphins don't want to lose him—he's valuable property.

The police are involved, but so far we're all sailing blind. No one knows *why* somebody wants Allie gone. The person we want could be a nut, some yo-yo who gets his kicks out of making threatening phone calls. Hammer could be a wild pick by this squirrel. Allie's name is in the papers this time of year. On the other hand—"

"On the other hand, Mr. Shayne," the doctor interrupted, "Allie Hammer is a Negro, our daughter a Caucasion, and their relationship a bit more than casual friendship. You came here looking for distraught parents of a girl, parents so desperate they—"

"We've got plenty of unsavory characters in certain sections of the city who can be hired to do anything, doctor," Shayne cut in, going blunt again. "And, guessing. . ." He looked around the room pointedly. ". . .I'd say you could afford to hire one of them."

Doctor Ray drew himself tall. "Good day, Mr. Shayne."

The redhead stared at the man for a moment, then lifted a hand in a casual wave and headed for the front door.

The doctor said from behind him, "When you see our daughter, Mr. Shayne, tell her to come home. Tell her to bring Allie with her. Neither has to run anywhere."

Outside, Shayne pounded through the hot sunshine to the Buick. He didn't feel he had gained an inch by the drive to the Ray home.

He got into the Buick and slammed the door. He jammed the key into the switch and caught the swift movement in the corner of his eye. He snapped his head and watched Sara Ray approach.

She was a lush-looking girl. Stabbing angrily across concrete in bright sunshine was not her forte. She would be more in character in a crowded party room, moving slowly, sensuously, from cluster to cluster.

She stopped two feet from the Buick. Tiny muscles played hopscotch in her cheeks; her eyes were brittle. "Do the world a favor, Mr. Shayne," she snarled, her lips curling, "and let Allie Hammer run off a cliff!"

"You don't like him, Sara?"

"He's black, isn't he?"

She drove away fast in the red Lotus.

IX

MIKE SHAYNE piloted the Buick reflexively, his craggy face pull-

ed down, large fingers working unconsciously against the steering wheel. The residential street ahead of him was clear. He yanked his ear. Should he be careening through the streets in hot pursuit of the Lotus? Elroy Tass and his theory about motive behind Allie Hammer's trouble loomed large in the detective's mind.

He grunted and flipped on the car radio, rolled the dial to a local station that featured news blurbs on the half hour. He ignored the condensed versions of world and national happenings, the pinpointing of city fender-benders.

But he was alert to the sports bulletin. The Miami Dolphins had lost the services of rookie sensation Allie Hammer for Sunday's important game with Los Angeles. Pulled hamstring. The veteran Max Potter was to replace Hammer. Potter had been Miami's number-one wide receiver until bumped by the young rookie at the start of the current season.

Shayne wondered how Max Potter felt. The thought opened a new avenue of speculation. He frowned, pondered. That avenue might be worth checking. Anything was at this stage in the case.

People were busy at Dolphins' headquarters. Art Havemeyer was particularly

busy. He had a phone jammed against his ear and he was squirming in his chair with a pained expression tugging his face into various odd shapes as he attempted to explain to the new Dolphins' owner why a pulled hamstring would keep a man out of a football game. But he took time out from the phone to listen to Shayne's request. It brought fresh wrinkles to Havemeyer's forehead before he yelled, "*Tex*! Tex Brown!"

A heavy man appeared in a doorway to Shayne's left. He wore a white T-shirt and shorts. His thighs filled the legs of the shorts.

"Run the personnel stuff on the idiot box for Shayne," the General Manager said and returned to the telephone.

The detective went with the beefy man into the back of the headquarters building, where

Tex Brown sat down at a computer and punched a button that lighted a pale green screen. He said, "Anybody in particular?"

"Max Potter."

"Maxie? Sure thing, fella. Maxie's got a long pedigree. This is his ninth season with us."

Tex Brown flicked nimble fingers lightly over buttons and sat back as Max Potter's life history appeared on the screen for Shayne to read.

All of Potter's professional football days had been with the Dolphins. During his first two seasons, he had been tried at several positions. The next four he had spent as the backup man to the great Paul Zabrowski, the All-Pro wide receiver. Then Zabrowski had retired and Potter had moved up to the number one spot for two seasons. Two things had happened to Potter prior to and at the start of the current season. He had become involved in the player's strike activities, and Allie Hammer had come along. Potter suddenly was backup again and playing behind a rookie.

There was an interesting sidebar. Potter had played college football at a small Florida school—and in state prison. He had arrived in the Dolphins tryout camp straight from prison and had made the squad.

"Where do I find Potter?" Shayne asked.

Tex Brown looked at a gold wrist watch. "Maybe at the practice field, maybe not. This is just about the hour Tree cuts the boys for the day."

The detective missed Potter. "Showered and gone," said Sam Tree. "We broke up a little early today. We're ready for Sunday. How come you wanna talk to him? Christ, Shayne, don't tell me to yank him, too!" He paused, added, "or do you want me to go against Oakland with only a running attack?"

Shayne wiped sweat from his brow as he measured Sam Tree. The locker room area behind him was humid and some of the humidity had seeped into the coach's private quarters. Tree stood before him, wide and solid; he wore a white towel knotted at his left hip, and he looked about six inches away from hostility.

"You got Potter from prison," the detective said flatly.

Tree looked surprised. "So?" Then he threw his arms wide in an expression of exasperation. He began to pace. "Shayne," he said, "a kid screws up, that doesn't mean he's fouled forever. Yeah, some of Maxie's experience was on a prison team. So what?

"He's basically a damn good

football player. And he's walked a straight line the past eight years. I like him. I need him. He's a helluva backup studhorse. More important, he's a steadying influence. He doesn't panic. Give me Maxie and Hoss Krispy and I can afford to take a chance on a kid like Allie Hammer."

"Who's Krispy?"

"Six-year man. Also a wide receiver. He and Maxie are buddies, live together. Man, what's with you? You got something against my wide receivers?"

Shayne drove to police headquarters. Will Gentry was in his private office. The black cigar stub in the corner of his mouth shot straight up and remained rigid with Shayne's entry. The detective recognized the chief's mood. It had not been a good day at headquarters.

"Thanks for the neat job on Jensen, Mike," Gentry growled. "Because of it, we managed to lose the kid again!"

"And if Jensen hadn't been one of your people?" Shayne countered.

Gentry yanked the cigar stub from his mouth, pointed it at the detective. "Because you're in doesn't mean we're out! Christ, Mike—"

He cut off the words, continued to stare hard for a moment, then fired the cigar butt into a waste basket. "Okay, okay. The kid still in town?"

"You don't know? Jensen didn't go back to Allie's apartment?"

"I've got a new face on the place. And he hasn't seen Hammer," the Chief growled like distant thunder.

"How about the white Corvette? Not parked out front?"

"No."

Shayne's face was hard as he put a hip on the corner of the chief's desk and jerked up the telephone, but it relaxed when Allie Hammer cautiously answered the ring.

"Everything quiet there?" the redhead asked.

"Yes."

"You talk to your friend?"

"Yes. . .she's expecting you," Hammer said cautiously.

"Okay. Good boy. What did you do with her car?"

"I took it to a garage, one of those parking places. You said someone could recognize it, so I. . . Shayne, who was the guy tailing me this morning?"

"A cop," Shayne said flatly.

"Oh, I thought—"

The detective interrupted, "You stick, Allie. Don't even poke your nose outside. "Okay?"

"Y-yes."

Shayne put the phone together. "I need a couple of prison pedigrees, Will."

"Yeah?" Gentry looked surprised.

"Dingo and a guy named Max Potter. Potter plays football for the Dolphins."

"The hell you say! How'd the kid get back inside his place without my man seeing him?"

"I didn't ask him, Will. Come on. The pedigrees may be important," Shayne urged.

"Enough to trade for a girl?"

Shayne grunted and stood.

"Mike," Gentry burst out, "I've got an unhappy pappa breathing fire on my people in Missing Persons! His name is Ray, and he's missing one daughter! He also happens to be heavy with a certain crowd in town—that crowd including the mayor! You want to take it from there?"

"I need those pedigrees, Will."

"Pappa says you were out to his house today! Pappa says—"

"When I leave here," Shayne interrupted, "I'm going to pick up the girl and take her home."

Gentry banged a fist against the edge of his desk. He glowered. Then suddenly he swept up the phone. Ten minutes later, Shayne had what he wanted. Dingo had been in prison twice. Max Potter had been in the same prison during Dingo's second stretch.

Shayne used Gentry's phone book, found a listing for Max Potter. He fingered through the Krispys. There were three. Fred Krispy and Max Potter had identical numbers and street addresses. He dialed.

"Krispy," the answering voice said.

"Potter there?" Shayne asked.

"Yeah. Hold it a sec."

Max Potter was receptive to a visit. "Sure, man. I've never met a private detective."

As Shayne approached the front door of Potter's home, it opened and a mountain of a man came out. He stopped dead and looked the detective over with ice-blue eyes that glittered out of a flat face that had seen plenty of combat service.

"Shayne?" he said. And, when the redhead nodded, "Just wanted to see what a private eye looked like."

He pushed past the detective, all but imbedding him in the wall.

X

MAX POTTER was a very tall, very wide man in his early thirties with very large, very broken teeth and an affable grin and manner. He filled matching T-shirt and slacks and fingered a carefully groomed handlebar mustache as he ushered Shayne into the modish apartment.

"My buddy, Hoss, went out,"

he said with a relaxed smile.

"I know—I just ran into him outside," said Shayne. "Is Krispy always like that?"

Potter's smile widened. "He's a beer freak and it's trough time for him. He's like me than, before I get my first morning coffee. He's got a special stool down the street at the Black Widow. Course he won't get bombed. It's that time of year, The Season. Five or six bottles and he'll be back. He has to watch his weight during The Season or old Sam Tree'll have him doing sixty laps. What's with you, Mr. Private Detective? How come you wanna talk to me?"

Mike Shayne fired his questions, and the player responded with frank openness.

Max Potter figured he'd be in football forever. He probably would die with a football clutched in his large mitts. Hell, he'd been in football as long as he could remember. He'd been up, he'd been down, but he'd been in football.

He'd been a big horse in junior high school, larger in high school. He'd met his match here and there in college, but not too frequently. With the Dolphins? The climb had slowed. Physical stature no longer was a decided advantage. He had found himself matched. He suddenly was just another tree in a forest. So a man found himself going to the natural talent well more often, thinking, drawing on past experience, savvy.

He'd been with the Dolphins eight seasons. He'd be around for a few more. He'd spent the first couple of seasons bouncing from position to position because the coaches didn't know what they were doing. Those were a couple of down years for him.

But then Sam Tree had come along and all of that had changed. Potter had been moved in behind Paul Zabrowski, been valuable, finally had moved up with Zabrowski's retirement. The last couple of seasons had been up seasons. He had been on top, riding high. And he was a tough dude. Not just some ordinary slob was going to come along and knock him off.

Allie Hammer wasn't an ordinary slob. The kid had talent. More important, he had youth. If Max Potter was with any other organization he still would be a number one wide receiver. But he was a Dolphin, and that's right where he wanted to be.

He'd rather be Number Two with the Dolphins than Number One on another field. Hard to figure? Not too—when a man considered the playoff

purses and his share of the Super Bowl melons.

"Raw kid moving in over experience didn't rankle you, huh?" Shayne wanted to know.

"Hell, yes, it rankled. Deep down inside a man says, why couldn't this kid have been born a piano player? But recognition was a vital part of what made another man experienced. The experienced man knew talent was going to come along someday. The experienced man planned. How do you cope with the new talent? A guy learns to adjust. At least a pro does."

And how had the scales tipped for Max Potter?

Allie Hammer was a helluva good football player. In a sense, Max Potter was damned glad he was with the Dolphins. If he was with another club, he might help shatter a lot of dreams—including those of a Number Two wide receiver.

So Max might help the kid?

Anything the kid wanted to know. The Dolphins were an *organization*.

"The kid's got a problem, Max. Off the field," Shayne pointed out.

"Yeah. I heard." Potter frowned.

"From whom?"

The kid himself. Some dodo had been harassing Allie Hammer, making threats. Allie had got a couple of phone calls, come around, asked Max what the hell he thought. Max had told the kid to tell the caller to go stuff donut holes. Dodos always were calling football players.

Max was concerned?

Hell, yes, Max was concerned. The Dolphins had a rhythm going. A *rhythm*. It led straight past the upcoming League Playoff to the Super Bowl—and those big fat bonuses. Allie Hammer was a part of that rhythm.

Why had Allie Hammer come to Max Potter?

That was the thing about Hammer that made Max Potter really nervous. Hammer had the savvy to draw on experience—somebody else's experience. That made Hammer a cool cat.

"About that experience," Shayne pressed. "You didn't mention prison."

Max Potter twirled both tips of the handlebar mustache; his stare became brittle. Finally he sad, "I don't consider the joint a part of my life, Shayne. It didn't happen. Okay?"

"Three years of five for a "B-and-E." It happened, Potter. You know a guy named Dingo?"

Potter's eyes gleamed. His fingers stopped twirling. "I've heard of him," he said slowly.

"Know him in the joint?"

"*Heard* of him. He was a

hothead. I stayed away from him."

"And since?" Shayne watched the player.

Potter took a few seconds before he said, "He came around to the stadium one time when me'n and Hoss were leaving. I told him to get lost."

"What did he want?"

"I never found out. Hoss said it was association, the guy wanted to go back to his neighborhood, tell the studs up and down the street he had a professional football player for a pal. Maybe. I dunno.

"Hoss is a thinker. He digs that kind of jazz. He likes to think about what makes people tick. Me? I don't worry about what makes other people tick. I've got Max Potter to worry about."

"You and Dingo just said, 'Hi,' and went your ways, huh?"

"Yeah, that's about it. He said, 'Hi.' I said, 'Hi. Get lost.' He said, 'Man, don't be hasty. You might want me someday.' I said, 'No way.' He said, 'If you ever do, try a guy called Skin. He's got a bookstore. . .'

"I've never gone out lookin' for any bookstore. And I haven't seen or heard from Dingo since. Shayne, how come you wanna know about a hothead? All of a sudden, you're makin' me nervous as hell."

"Association."

Max Potter blinked hard. "Me and Dingo?"

"Allie's out of Sunday's game, Max. Who's taking his place?"

"I am." He frowned.

"And maybe you'd like to see Allie gone forever."

The frown deepened. "I don't like what you're sayin', Shayne."

"Maybe Dingo's made a few phone calls for you, Max," the detective continued. "Motive —with Allie gone, Sam Tree goes to the well. And who's the best man in the well?"

"You got it wong, man," Potter shook his head.

"You got bumped at the start of the season," Shayne pressed. "And your years in football are numbered."

"Cut it out!"

"Yesterday Art Havemeyer and Sam Tree bring in a private detective. The word spreads. You get nervous, you go to *your* well. You remember Dingo and a guy called Skin. You do a little searching and—"

"Crazy!"

"Dingo tried to make a hit on me last night, Max. *Somebody* sent him."

"Not *me*! And get the hell out of my place! *Beat it*!"

Potter leaped to his feet. He loomed over the seated Shayne. He was a threat. His face was hard, his eyes cold and the handlebar mustache quivered as he stood slightly spread-legged with large fists clenching and unclenching.

Shayne stood. Neither man moved. The air between them seemed to crackle.

Then Shayne turned to the door. "See you, Max."

Potter remained silent and unmoving.

XI

IN THE CAR, heading toward the apartment Allie Hammer shared with Elroy Tass, the redhead pondered Max Potter. No question.

Potter had the strongest motive—turned up so far—to want Hammer gone from the Dolphins scene. But there was no evidence Potter had made or instigated the threats. The thinking about Potter was speculation. No more.

Elroy Tass opened the door to Shayne's thumb against the buzzer. He ran a hand over his bald head. His expression alerted the redhead. "He's gone again," Tass said. "He got another phone call thirty minutes ago."

Shayne moved with and past Biscayne Boulevard traffic as if it did not exist. He turned right on Morningside and spotted the motel sign sticking up in the second block.

The Blue Moon was a short string of squat units. It might have been a first class joint during World War II. Time, salt air and laziness had given birth to warped fronts, rusted screens and mildew. The Blue Moon looked open to clandestine rendezvous, alcoholic binges by loners—and hiding out. No more.

Eight unit doors plus the office entry faced Morningside. There were no braked cars. Shayne eased the Buick around back to more units. There was a single parked car. It was a new, green Pinto with a dented front door on the driver's side; it faced Unit Fourteen.

No white Corvette sat in front of Unit Nine.

Shayne braked with a scowl before Unit Eight, left the

Buick, took a quick look around. Nothing, not even a curious motel manager was in sight.

Premonition weighed on him. He thumbed back his hat and opened his coat. Something about the silence of the area was a warning. He looked at the window of Unit Nine. It was draped, and there was no movement.

Shayne's scowl deepened. Anyone inside should have heard the approach and parking of the Buick. Wanda Ray was in semi-hiding, and she was a rookie at hiding. She should be on edge, curious. A man could expect at least the movement of a drape—unless the unit was empty.

Or unless somebody had carried out a death threat.

Shayne had a vivid mental image of an innocent girl spread-eagled in her own blood on the floor of a dilapidated motel room as he banged on the door with a large fist.

Silence. He twisted, looked around again, forced himself to wait. Wanda Ray could be in the bath, possibly showering. It would explain why she might not have heard the parking of a car outside.

He put his ear against the door, listened hard. Nothing. He banged with the fist, turned profile to the door. The banging should arouse someone, somewhere.

The sound of the gunshot made him a statue.

The wood of the door splintered at Shayne's middle. Had he not been in profile. . .

He yanked out his forty-five and kicked the door open. He dived into the room, drawing on the long-ago teaching of an expert gymnast.

He rolled as the piercing scream filled his ears, came up on one knee, the forty-five leveled. He stopped the squeeze of his trigger finger a hair short of plastering Allie Hammer's guts on the wall.

The crouched Allie held a small gun in his right hand. The muzzle was tipped down now and the youth looked as if he might never move again.

Shayne growled an oath and leaped at Hammer. He yanked the small gun from Hammer's hand. It was a Saturday Night Special, looked new.

Shayne stuffed the tiny gun into his coat pocket, caught Hammer's shirt front in his hands and smashed the youth back against the wall. Hammer's eyes became large circles of fear.

"No!"

The low cry came from behind Shayne. He snapped his head around as he continued to hold Hammer. The girl cringed

in a far corner. She was long, narrow and plain, with straight wheat-colored hair hanging far below her shoulders.

Her eyes were hidden behind dark glasses. She wore a trench coat and a floppy brimmed gray felt hat.

"Don't. . .don't kill him," the girl managed to whisper.

Shayne released Hammer suddenly, stepped back. Hammer's knees caved. He almost went to the thin carpeting before regaining his balance.

Shayne stuffed the forty-five back into its rig. "What," he snarled, "in hell is going on?"

The youth pawed his own shirt front. It was obvious he was out of control. Saliva made his heavy lips glisten. He shook his head and then he shuddered all over and became stiff.

Shayne slapped Hammer hard, the slaps cracking in the silence of the room. And suddenly he had a wildcat on his back. The girl had leaped. Her thin forearms were locked against his Adam's apple in a vicious hold and her reed-like legs had whipped around his thighs. He felt her teeth catch his ear.

He sliced an elbow into the girl's ribs. She yelped in his ear. But the elbow had freed him. The leg clamps left his thighs and the arms were gone from his throat.

He caught Hammer's shirt front again and banged him back against the wall. At the same time, he reached behind him and captured material of a blouse. He brought the girl around and put her against the wall beside Hammer. He leaned into both. They pawed his wrists.

"*Talk*, damnit!" he graveled.

The sound stilled them. It was as if they had been popped with an overpowering tranquilizer. Suddenly.

Each stiffened and then relaxed. They quit pawing and sagged, heads dropped.

"A-all right. . ." muttered the girl, "kill us."

Shayne released them. He turned and stomped across the small confine of the room to the single bed. It still was turned down, rumpled and sagging, the sheets gray and patched, a thin green blanket on the carpeting. There was a cigarette-scarred table and a cheap lamp, the stem bent slightly and the shade yellow with age. The small glass ashtray on the table was dust-coated and unused.

"Man," Allie Hammer whispered from behind the detective, "we thought. . ."

He didn't finish. Shayne whirled. "You got another threat," he snapped. "And charged here!"

"This time he said he was go-

ing to kill Wanda! I figured he knew where she was!"

"After this morning, you didn't think anything about leading someone here?" Shayne snapped with disgust.

"I thought about that, yeah, man! It's why I didn't go for the car! I walked and I ran! I went in and out of alleys and through shopping centers and finally I got a cab. Nobody trailed me!"

Shayne pitched the Saturday Night Special to Allie Hammer. "But you stopped long enough to buy that thing!"

Hammer hefted the gun nervously in his palm as he shuffled against the wall. His eyes flicked away from the detective, came back.

"Okay," he breathed, "I've had enough. I'm scared. I bought this damn thing, yeah! I came here to get Wanda, to cut. I'd get rid of the gun as soon as we were out of town. But she's got a stubborn streak in her, man. She likes to argue. She—"

"And I bang on the door while you're arguing."

"Un-huh."

"And all of a sudden you figure you're not such a cool cat with your alleys and your shopping centers."

"I'm scared like I never been scared before, man. You ever been scared, Shayne?"

"Yeah, Allie, you scared hell out of me when you fired that popgun. This latest threat—tell me exactly what the guy said," Shayne demanded.

"He said. . ." Allie Hammer licked his lips. "He said, 'The girl is dead, nigger!' And that flipped me. I mean, man, for a couple of seconds I thought he meant he already had found Wanda. I thought—"

"Those were the exact words?"

"Yeah."

"Nigger?"

"Yeah."

Shayne snapped his look to the girl. She was slouched against the wall, her hands and shoulder blades providing support for her lean body. She returned the detective's look, tiny eyes bright behind gold-rimmed glasses. The eyes told him nothing. But he found something in a minute twitch at the corners of her narrow, unpainted mouth.

Defiance was building in her fast.

"No running, Wanda?"

"I got on that treadmill when I came here last night—and it was a mistake. We could be running forever, Mr. Shayne. Look at us right now, here in this place, Allie with a gun. It's crazy."

"You suggest?" Shayne asked.

"We ignore this sickie, If we

stand up to him, he'll go away. *He'll* be the one who's frightened!"

Shayne measured the girl, yanked his earlobe. "You have a sister who doesn't like Allie, Wanda."

She straightened, the gray eyes narrowed for an instant. "Sara is a warped person, Mr. Shayne."

"Un-huh. She could be. Okay, kids, we travel. Let's move it."

The girl balked. "No more hiding, Mr. Shayne."

"You're going home," snapped Shayne. "I'm taking you. And you, Allie, are going to your apartment, where I'm going to tell your buddy, Tass, to sit on your head if that's what it takes to keep you off the streets."

XII

DUSK HAD SETTLED on the city. Outside, Mike Shayne looked up and down the motel layout. No new cars and no one in sight. The sound of a gunshot evidently didn't trigger curiosity at the Blue Moon. It figured.

Shayne motioned Allie Hammer and Wanda Ray inside the Buick. They rolled smoothly toward downtown Miami. His passengers suddenly were silent, caught up in their own thinking. His thoughts were clicking, too.

He already had eliminated Max Potter as a suspect. He had been with Potter when Allie Hammer had received the latest threat. So scratch one Potter. Leaving whom? Tass? Tass could set up the calls, okay, but Tass and Hammer were buddies supposedly. And what possibly could be Tass' motive?

Gamblers? Gentry and his boys hadn't turned up a smell so far. Someone on another ball club? Someone on a club that might have a shot at the Super Bowl if the Dolphins' ranks could be thinned? Someone who had hired another someone in Miami to make the calls? A possibility. But remote. So look for a nut, the guy who got his jollies by making telephone threats.

Or get closer to home. . .

The front door of the Ray house popped open before Shayne stopped the Buick. Wanda Ray's mother shot outside, then stopped and waited as the girl slid off the seat with Allie Hammer.

Shayne leaned across the seat and told the girl, "Stick it out here, young lady."

"I'll get a good night's sleep," she said flatly.

It was all she said. She squeezed Hammer's hand, then walked into her mother's embrace. Shayne watched mother

and daughter disappear into the house.

Where was the good doctor? He wondered.

But with Allie on the seat beside him again and the Buick rolling, he said, "Sara Ray, Allie."

Hammer shot him a quick look. He remained silent for a moment, then drew a deep breath. "Me'n that fox? Bad vibes, man. Sara-baby done got a thing against my ancestry. A very large thing. You know?"

"If I wanted her, where would I find her?"

"The Baxter. It's a plush highrise on—"

The detective interrupted. "I know where it is. Will I find her alone?"

"Man—"

"Just answer the questions, Allie. I'm working," Shayne snapped.

"Okay, so maybe you find Sara-baby alone, maybe you don't. I dunno, and I don't care. She was married to a fat cat once, a guy named Tompkins, but he ain't around no more. I understand she chased him. Kept his name and his green, though. I also understand she likes to keep a stud or two around her place. So maybe you find a stable. But you're talking to the wrong jock, man. Look for a horse of another color, Mr. Detective."

"Got it, Allie."

Hammer went silent for a few seconds before he muttered, "I wish to hell I did."

But Shayne said nothing until he had braked in front of the building where Allie Hammer and Elroy Tass shared the apartment.

Shayne looked around while Hammer was sliding from the Buick. He knew there was a cop—suddenly snapped alert—out there on the street somewhere, watching them. Hammer leaned elbows on the open window, brought his head down to be framed.

"I've made a decision, Shayne," he said flatly. "Twenty-four hours. I'm gone at this hour tomorrow night with or without Wanda—or I play in Sunday's game. I've had enough."

"So now I know why Sam Tree stays three-deep in every position, huh? He never knows when a quitter is going to surface."

Shayne roared away from Allie Hammer. He hoped he had angered the boy. Anger might put anchors on Hammer's feet.

The Baxter went up high into the clear early evening Miami sky. There was a small lobby with a bank of self-service elevators and an entry desk. A chic dark-haired girl behind the desk said Sara Tompkins could be found in Seventeen-B.

A young man opened the door to Shayne's buzz. He would have looked at home in a magazine surfboard ad. He was tanned, toned and alert, wide in the shoulders, slim waist, and his long thighs filled the purple flare trousers.

He wore a mod choker of tiny animal teeth and a white silk shirt which opened deep on a smooth bronze-colored front. It all was topped by a full head of yellow hair.

"Yeah?" The young man didn't move from the doorway. His suspicious eyes inventoried Shayne.

"Sara."

The blue eyes squeezed down. The young man hesitated, then said, "You got the wrong pad, man."

He started to close the door. Behind him a woman's voice said, "Nickie. . .who is it?"

Shayne popped his left hand against the young man's bare chest and his right hand against the door. Both snapped away from him. He moved into the apartment, saw Sara Tompkins entering the vast living room far across the room. She stopped. Her body stiffened and her eyes became hard.

"What do you want here?" she asked in a tone that was brittle.

She was in a snug yellow pantsuit that fitted without a wrinkle every hollow and hill of her lush body. She looked freshly bathed and she stood slightly twisted, hands high to one ear. She had been fitting an earpiece, but her fingers were still now.

The young man growled and

came toward the detective. Shayne shot out a left, snapped the young man's head. He yelped and reeled back a couple of steps, then he threw a wild right hand. Shayne caught the wrist, twisted and spun the young man across the room. He went down hard across the back of a chair.

Shayne stepped forward and planted a swift kick against the young man's buttocks, triggering another help. As the young man came up, Shayne jammed a knee against his spine, caught yellow hair and jerked. The young man made a strangling sound.

"Mr. Shayne, *quit* it!" screeched Sara Tompkins.

"You like making phone calls, buster?" Shayne growled in the young man's ear. "You get kicks?"

Sara Tompkins moved in swiftly, caught Shayne's arm and attempted to turn him. He drove a sharp elbow against her middle. It made her gasp. She stepped back.

"You're. . .crazy!" she gasped.

"Come on, Nickie-boy," Shayne growled, applying pressure to the young man's spine, "tell me about the call you made to night for the little lady Sara."

"N-no. . .no calls, man. . ." the young man gasped. He attempted to reach Shayne's wrist.

Shayne shook him, looked at Sara. "You want me to snap his neck?"

"Mr. Shayne. . .you're insane! We just got back here from the police station!"

Shayne stared hard at her for a few seconds then released the young man with a snap. He clamped huge hands on the shoulders of the white silk shirt and spun the man. "Name?" he snarled.

"N-Nick. . .Hastings."

"Occupation?" the detective snapped.

"Mr. Shayne, quit it!" Sara yelped.

He snapped another look at her. She was wide-eyed and taut, her fingers clenching and unclenching.

"I. . .I hit a man," she gasped. "With my car! A pedestrian! I hit him as I was returning here from my parents' place this afternoon. We've been. . .at the police station. I called Nickie. He called an attorney. We've been—"

"I can check, Sara."

"My God, check!"

OUTSIDE, slouched low behind the steering wheel of his parked Buick, Shayne sat for a long time, simmering in deep thought. When he arrived at the Baxter, he had been keyed. Sara Ray Tompkins was a racist—and Allie Hammer's call-

er had used the term nigger a second time. Add—Wanda was Sara's sister. Sara had males around, and it was logical that among those males would be another racist or two. Add the fact that Sara would know how to get a male racist friend to make phone calls for her.

Tonight's call to Allie Hammer meant someone knew Allie Hammer had not left town. Sara had been at the parental home while the detective was fishing for facts. Sara could have assumed from the presence of the detective that Allie Hammer still had not bolted despite the threats.

So, another phone call. . .

Except that Sara and Nick Hasting had been tied up in a police station when the fourth call was made.

Shayne slapped the steering wheel and lighted a cigarette. He pulled the smoke deep into his lungs and exhaled slowly. Max Potter. Sara Ray Tompkins. Each with motive. But both shot down as suspects. So shift the thinking gears. Find a third suspect.

Three. Shayne grunted. That was going to the well. He smoked. Sam Tree probably could give him lessons on going to the. . .

He caught the steering wheel and yanked himself erect in the seat with the thought, the cigarette forgotten. He searched his memory. New pieces fell into place. Click, click, click. He yanked his left earlobe with his right hand.

The motive was there. Knowledge of what was going on could be there. It all fitted snugly.

Shayne snapped the cigarette outside and pointed the Buick across the city. It didn't take him long to reach Potter's apartment From somewhere inside, Max Potter yelled, "The door's open. Come on in."

He was deep in a chair, bare toes sticking up from a footstool. Opposite him was the brilliance of a television picture. He had turned his head in expectation, but he didn't move his body with Shayne's entry.

"You again?" he almost sneered.

"Where's your buddy Hoss?"

"Still at the saloon, I'd guess. Why?" Potter looked bored.

"You and Krispy," Shayne said. "You're two and three behind Allie, right?"

"That's the way it shapes at the moment, yeah," Potter said carefully. "Why?"

"Krispy ever been number one?"

"Naw." Potter relaxed.

"Krispy ever figured he *should* be number one?" Shayne pushed.

"I dunno. I guess so. Hell,

you don't join up to sit on a bench," Potter snorted his opinion of the question.

"Still, both of you have been with the Dolphins for a long time."

Max Potter pulled his feet down and sat up. "Shayne," he said slowly, "you're driving at something. I'm not sure what. But I can tell you this—a guy can bounce in this game or he can find a home. Sometimes, maybe, when you find that home, you're not exactly kingpin, but you'll finally accept your role just to keep the home.

"I've never been traded—Hoss has never been traded. You wanna know why? Because we both decided a long time ago we wanted to be Dolphins. We don't *want* to be traded. Therefore, we may accept what appears in the eyes of some to be secondary roles just to be Dolphins.

"Okay, secondary in one sense. You don't get the call at the opening whistle. But not secondary in another sense. You may be pacing the sideline, but you're still a Dolphin. Get it?"

"On the other hand, if you're a backup man your chances of being traded are higher, right?" Shayne pressed.

"Not necessarily," Potter replied.

"There might even come a day you could be dropped."

Potter remained silent, his lips and eyes tight.

"Especially if age is beginning to work against you. What's a professional football life expectancy, Max? How many seasons does the average guy have?"

"Shayne," Potter said, his voice flat, "are you leaning on me for what's happening to Hammer?"

The detective eyed the large man for a long time, then said, "Nope," and walked out of the apartment.

All of the creepiness of the Black Widow bar was in the name. It was a corner, neighborhood, friendly joint. It wasn't jammed elbow to elbow at nine p.m., nor was it empty. There was a small but constant flow. Most of the tables and booths remained occupied. People left, others arrived.

Shayne picked the largest man at the bar and took an empty stool beside him. The man cupped a half empty beer bottle in a huge right hand, hiding a good percentage of the bottle.

"Krispy?" Shayne ordered a cognac with ice water chaser.

The large man stirred, stared at him. He had a flat face and a huge, heavily muscled body. He had lost most of his hair.

"Yeah," he said. He finished the half bottle of beer and waved for another.

"My name is Mike Shayne."

"Yeah?"

"You're a busy man on the telephone."

"That right?" Krispy drank half the new bottle.

"You know where Allie lives. You know about his white girlfriend. Maybe there's a little racism in you, maybe not. I don't think that figures. I think the job figures. You're what? Six seasons with the Dolphins? You've got a few more ahead of you maybe. But possible not with a hotshot kid suddenly moving in. You're number three again. You could be traded. Six years and number three. I suspect it could make you ripe."

"Oh, boy," Krispy breathed without moving.

"But with a hotshot kid gone. . ."

Shayne let the words hang, tasted the cognac. Krispy drank from the bottle, and then they sat side by side silent and unmoving, taking up a lot of space, staring at nothing behind the bar.

"You shouldn't have sent Dingo after me," Shayne finally said. "I don't scare—and in a few days he's going to talk."

"From his grave?" Krispy sneered. "You better check the hospital, man. Dingo's cashed in."

He faced Shayne suddenly, turned on a crooked grin that wasn't a grin at all. Muscles in his face danced, his eyes were bright and flat. "Anything else, Mr. Detective?"

"Yeah," Shayne said, searching his mind. He had figured Dingo to be a lever. "The Dolphins," he said.

Krispy's eyes widened briefly. He cocked his head a little on one side.

Shayne shrugged, grasping the new straw. "The word spreads. Somebody inside their own organization is leaning on the kid, and the kid is green in everybody's pocket. The Dolphins may go to the Super Bowl even without the kid, but the percentage is higher *with* him. So what happens if the word spreads that a guy inside—"

"Crap, Shayne," Krispy interrupted, shaking his head. "Pure crap! Who'd believe you?"

"From where I sit, Hoss, that's for you to worry about," said the detective. "My guess is there only has to be one believer—somebody who'll smash a kneecap during a practice session some afternoon. After all, some guys must like the extra loot that goes along with being in the playoffs. And if I was one of those guys, and if I suspected, I think I'd weigh

the loss of a third-string wide receiver against. . ."

Shayne let the words drop with a wave of his hand. He left the stool. "Ah, hell, it isn't important, I guess. Not to me anyway. It's *your* knee."

He turned from Hoss Krispy. But the sound of the breaking bottle brought him around. Krispy had lunged. His right arm was high and the neck of the beer bottle was in his fist. Jagged spears of glass loomed at Shayne.

The detective brought up his left arm to block the slash. The spears were on target. But his coat sleeve, plus the padding of the bandage underneath, halted penetration.

Shayne shot a solid right blow into Krispy's midsection. Krispy doubled. Shayne banged his hands against the bent man's shoulders. Krispy went back, spilled around a chair and went down to the floor. He scrambled. Shayne moved in to finish him off.

Then the detective froze as a large foot came down on Hoss Krispy and pinned him against the floor.

Shayne stared at Max Potter.

"I've been thinking, man."

It was all Max Potter said. He bent over Hoss Krispy, stood with the foot on Krispy's chest, shaking his head. "Hoss, ol' buddy," he finally breathed, "you hit the panic button. The kid's good, yeah, but you'n me—we've been around a few seasons. We've seen the good ones come, the good ones go. We're still here. Man, how come you had to hit the panic button on this one?"

Hoss Krispy didn't answer.

In the Next Issue—

THE RICH DIE, TOO

A Thrilling New Mike Shayne Complete Short Novel

by BRETT HALLIDAY

On the surface, all was amity—until the shooting started. Then came the extortion threats, with grim death stalking not far behind. Three little rich girls all grown up—the very best of lifelong friends—so how did extortion and murder get into the act? That dangerous little problem was up to Mike Shayne to find out.

THE ELYSIAN GAMBIT

A cufflink was the only clue to the brutal murder, and it pointed in two directions. Only Leschi's instinct as a cop could solve the crime—and prevent the murderer from making his second try.

by JERRY JACOBSON

DETECTIVE LIEUTENANT Sam Leschi logged the call from a Mr. Hyram Wynette at 10:12 p.m. on a muggy summer's evening.

He lopped off three minutes for the time it took Wynette to get from Elysian Playfield to a public telephone on Post Avenue, the southern boundary of the Park Department playfield located on the northern rim of the city central business district. That made the approximate time of the discovery of the boy's body closer to 10:09 or 10:10.

"I was giving Sheik his nightly romp in the park," Wynette said. "My German shepherd. After watching the chess match in the playfield's recreation room. The boy is Yassar Teiraswan, the one in all the newspapers lately. I still can't believe it. I saw the match myself less than an hour ago. And now he's . . ."

"Go back to the playfield, Mr. Wynette," Sam Leschi said. "But don't touch the body and don't pick up anything you might find at the scene."

"I-I'm afraid I already did, Lieutenant," came Wynette's apologetic voice. "Touch something, I mean. Pick something up. A cuff link, Silver rimmed, with silver script initials on a black face. The initials are

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D.B." There was a weighted pause. "Those are the initials of the city chess champion Teiraswan played tonight, has been playing the last week and a half, Daniel Barth."

"We'll get into all of that later," Leschi told Wynette. "You just go back to the playfield and meet the patrolmen when they arrive."

Leschi had two patrol cars dispatched to the playfield and then drove across town. He thought about the series of matches between the thirteen-year-old chess whiz from Iran and Daniel Barth, the fifty-three-year-old city champion and expert-rated player in the United States Chess Federation. He didn't suppose there was anyone in town who wasn't aware of the matches, if they read their newspapers with anything more than casual, headline indifference.

The feature stories had been front page material for the past two weeks, ever since Barth had unexpectedly run into the teenaged chess juggernaut from Iran.

Up to that point, Daniel Barth had not really been much of an item, even as the city's chess champion. He had been hired by the City Department of Parks and Playfields at a small salary to tour the city's public playfields. As part of the Summer Youth Program, Barth gave impromptu chess instructions to disadvantaged and unemployed youth, as well as to senior citizens adrift and lonely in the public parks, playgrounds and playfields.

After his instructional sessions, Barth would play from six to twelve matches simultaneously, depending upon how many enthusiasts had the time and inclination to sit down for an hour or more in a stifling, un-air-conditioned park recreation room. Barth would play off the games and then, after giving pointers and congratulating those who had played serviceably against him, would move on to another public playfield.

From Monday through Friday, he would visit two playfields a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, in addition to holding down his regular job as a swing-shift postal supervisor.

Up until meeting young Teiraswan, Daniel Barth had not lost a single match, which was to be expected. What had not been expected was that the brilliant young son of an electrical engineer would wander down to a public playfield to wet his feet on what American teenagers did for sport and recreation in the long summer of indolent months between terms of school.

They had met and now it was city history and phenomenal news. From the outset young Teiraswan employed a disciplined and aggressive Max Lange attack, and stuck to it. It was a complicated style of play Leschi himself knew to be rarely seen in master and expert circles.

When the game ended and congratulations were given, it was the elder hand that was extended to the younger. Yassar Teiraswan had picked Daniel Barth's defenses apart with the assiduous attention of a lone vulture feasting and had won a stunned resignation from Barth in just thirty-eight moves.

The newspapers, deep in the doldrums of a no-news summer, picked up on an obvious circulation-builder, a series of eight games between the two players, with the winner picking up all of a five-hundred dollar purse put up by the newspaper and its advertisers. Both participants agreed to the public matches at Elysian Playfield, for varying reasons, Leschi imagined: Barth only to vindicate himself after what might have been careless, over-confident play; young Yassar Teiraswan simply to work off youthful exurberance which had no outlet to pick up some summer spending money and perhaps most importantly of all, to make a few friends by becoming the playfield's hero.

Four days after the first match, the second game was played to a packed house in the small, Elysian Playfield recreation house. Two hundred spectators and kibitzers crowded around the table inside, the newspaper reported in the next afternoon's edition, with another three-hundred watching and analyzing the moves outside on a large magnetic chess board, with the game's moves being relayed verbally through an open window.

Two newsphotos appeared with the article. One was snapped from over Daniel Barth's right shoulder early in the game, showing the board and pieces in early allignment

and young Teiraswan running a hand through Beatle-like, bobbed coal-black hair and staring down at the board. The second was snapped at the match's conclusion and showed both players shaking hands cordially if not like the dearest of friends.

And now, after the playing of their third match, it appeared Daniel Barth was the winner by grim default. Yassar Teiraswan was dead.

All of the city's public playgrounds closed at nine-thirty, including Elysian Playfield. When Sam Leschi drove up on Post Avenue, the field lights were off. The softball field caught dim light from the tennis courts two hundred yards distant, which were coin-operated and all active.

From there a player would see only the bulky forms of humans out on the softball field if that much, not substance or features, or identity. The fieldhouse was perhaps a full hundred yards from the tennis courts, with the softball field more distant still. Leschi saw the cluster of human shapes about mid-centerfield as he drove up and parked.

The crowd around the uncovered body of Yassar Teiraswan included four city patrolman and a man in his late-fifties accompanied by a leashed German shpeherd. The boy was dressed less than casually in yellow cut-off trousers, and tennis sneakers without socks. He was bare-chested. Nearby lay a brilliant red gaucho hat.

"His somewhat sloppy dress infuriated Barth at the match," commented Hyram Wynette to Leschi without solicitation. "He had nearly demanded to Phil Burdon, the parks director, that the boy put on a shirt. Burdon wasn't certain how to rule on that because this wasn't a United States Chess Federation sanctioned match or anything such as that. But Teiraswan willingly assented and borrowed a sweat-shirt from another boy."

Leschi nodded and took down Wynette's address and telephone number as he noted the coroner's ambulance cruise up Post Avenue, searching for an entrance. He dispatched one of the patrolmen to tell them to walk-in the stretcher.

"Mr. Wynette," Leschi said, after the patrolman moved off, "you say you watched the match this evening?"

"From first move to last," Hyram Wynette said.

"Did you happen to note at what time it was concluded?"

"Eight forty-five exactly. I recall looking at my watch just before Daniel Barth resigned because the game had started

at seven o'clock, and I told my wife I'd be back home at nine to watch my favorite television show, that private detective one, on Channel nine."

"Then you went home and came back to the park," Leschi said.

"After the television show at ten o'clock," Wynette said. "I live a block away, on Corliss Street. I always romp Sheik here every evening at ten o'clock."

"You say Daniel Barth resigned the match tonight against the boy," Sam Leschi said. "How did he take this third straight loss?"

"I'd say silently and sullenly. But seething inside. The boy got on Barth's nerves right away showing up for the match in shaggy cut-offs and bare-chested, with the television news crew and newspaper photographers and big crowds and all. You could tell by his expression he thought Teiraswan meant to degrade him and the match and Barth's stature as the city champion."

Leschi got as much of it down as he could. "What about during the match? Do you remembering obersving both the players' demeanors?"

"Yassar Teiraswan was I'd say, cocky, and fidgety for a third win. But mostly cocky. He had the crowd on his side and he knew it. He was steering the play again and forcing Barth into what I considered to be faulty defenses. To make the tension worse on Barth, the boy kept sucking on the mouth of a pop bottle and adjusting his pieces in the middle of their squares during Barth's playing time. Barth called him on the latter twice, telling him to do it on his own time.

"He seemed highly agitated," said Wynette. "But anyone would be. It's only fair not to distract your opponent. But the boy really couldn't have been faulted. He was very nervous and wasn't winning the game at that stage."

They stood aside now as the lab crew and photographer began their work. One lab man began pegging and stringing sector squares of three-feet each for evidence gathering. One of the ambulance attendants thoughtfully draped a gray blanket temporarily over the boy's body.

"Tell me about what you observed to take place after the match, Mr. Wynette."

"Well, there was the usual whooping and shouting and back-slapping when Barth indicated resignation. The flash bulbs going off, the news reporters from the papers and television all rushing young Teiraswan for stories and quotes."

"But not Barth," Leschi said.

"They left him pretty much alone. Not that he wanted it any other way. It was my feeling he wanted to get out of the recreation room as quickly and with as little talk and embarrassment as he could. He even threw up his hands and arms a few times admonishing the photographers and television cameramen not to take his picture. I don't think he was very successful. Losers are news, too."

"So you say Daniel Barth left almost immediately after the match."

"I saw him leave the *recreation room*," corrected Wynette. "I didn't see him leave the park, though I presume he went home. I mean, there didn't seem much point for him to stick around after a third straight humiliating defeat."

"Do you know where Daniel Barth lives?" Leschi asked.

"A few blocks northeast of the playfield, the 3500-block of Millburleigh Street. His address is in the telephone book. He was something of a minor celebrity and I can never resist learning where people live, if it's somebody living in my neighborhood."

Suddenly Hyram Wynette chopped off his words, as if a new thought had just struck him. He gave a tug on the leash to subdue the skittish German shepherd.

"Lieutenant, it occurs to me that I've been talking like a man who's accusing Daniel Barth of killing the boy without proof, or evidence, or a trial or anything. I don't want to do that. I know how important it is that a man's guilt be proven and that his innocence be presumed."

"Did you want to say something in defense of Daniel Barth?" Leschi said.

"I think I should, yes. First, I don't think a man of Barth's usual calm could do such a thing. He's a postal supervisor and a man who makes reasoned decisions at work as he does on a chess board. I've talked with the man, only casually of course, and only on the most general of subjects. But he doesn't strike me as the type of man capable of this sort of violence and especially against a mere boy hardly into his teens. It also strikes me that Yassar Teiraswan's cockiness might have made him more silent enemies than vocal friends here at Elysian Playfield.

"I don't know who those boys might be, but *I do know* kids don't go much for the kind of cocky genius Teiraswan strutted the last week or so. That cuff link I picked up off the grass could have been planted

here by one of these silent enemies—by Teiraswan's killer —to make it appear Daniel Barth killed him out of the humiliating rage of losing three straight public matches to him."

"The cuff link," Leschi reminded Wynette.

Wynette took it from a pocket of his trousers. It was figured exactly as Wynette had described it over the telephone: oval, with a silver rim and embossed silver initials "D.B." on a black background.

Leschi asked Wynette. "Did you happen to notice the movements of Yassar Teiraswan after the match?"

"Well he was pretty much mobbed by reporters and fans alike in the recreation room. I stayed to watch him re-play a couple of turning-point moves on the board and then I left for my television detective program."

"But he must have lingered on at the playfield," Leschi said, half-aloud and half to himself. "Until the recreation room was closed and the field lights were turned off at nine-thirty."

"Yes, I suspect he may have."

"How populated is the playfield after nine-thirty?" Leschi wanted to know.

"Not very, Lieutenant. Only the tennis players on the courts at the west-end of the playfield. Unless they have a commercial league softball game, everyone usually heads for home."

Leschi gazed toward the courts, some two hundred yards distant. "I'm curious as to why none of the tennis players saw this incident."

"You wouldn't be," Wynette said, "if you put yourself in their place. We can see them clearly from here because of the tennis court lighting. But when the playfield lights are out as they are now, you see nothing from the courts but total darkness. I know because I've run Sheik up there."

WYNETTE COULD add nothing to his statement and so Leschi told him he could leave for home. Leschi then sent one of the patrolmen to the distant courts to ask the handful of tennis players if any remembered seeing a young boy dressed in yellow cut-offs and a red gaucho hat in the vicinity of the courts in the past hour and to obtain the names and addresses of any who had.

This done, Leschi turned his attention on the body and the surrounding grassy area. He removed the blanket and then moved off a few paces. The grass appeared more trampled than it would normally have been had young Yassar Teira-

swan's attacker made his assault totally unseen and unsuspected. But he had not.

The dead boy's feet were arranged away from the recreation house and there were bruises on his left temple, cheek and forearms where he had tried to ward off blows. It was clear Yassar Teiraswan had been stalked some distance from the recreation house out across the darkened softball field.

After twenty minutes Leschi gave a curt nod, and two ambulance attendants put the boy's body into the ambulance and drove off.

Two of the patrolmen meanwhile had been off probing in bushy embankments and glens of trees. When they returned one of them came carrying a bloodied softball bat stamped "Property of Parks Department."

One of the patrolmen Leschi had sent off to the tennis courts returned now. There had been a complete change-over in players in the past half hour. None of the new players recalled seeing anything of a young boy in yellow cut-offs and a red gaucho hat. Leschi nodded.

There was still the cuff link, of course. Leschi admitted to himself the possibility that Daniel Barth had removed it along with the other during the match with Yassar Teiraswan so that he could move his hands and arms freely during the play.

Extending the argument in his mind, Leschi granted it was *also* possible for the cuff link to have been plucked from the table by Yassar's killer, unnoticed, and then planted next to the body to make Daniel Barth out the killer. The fact that Barth's hatred for Yassar Teiraswan's brash and bluster, after a third straight humiliating loss at the board tonight, could have been brought to a killer's notice.

Leschi wondered what kind of photographic record had been preserved of the match. Going to a phone booth, he called the city's two daily papers and learned both had sent a photographer to Elysian Playfield that evening to take some feature shots. Neither man had returned to his respective newspaper offices yet; Leschi took down the names of Grant Stone of the *Post-Record* and Rolfe Hayes of the *Morning-Intelligencer* for later.

In the phone booth, he found the address of young Phil Burdon, the parks director at Elysian Playfield. It was late, now—near midnight—but when Leschi told him about Yassar Teiraswan, Burdon told him he'd do anything and everything he could.

What Leschi wanted from Burdon was a list of the names and addresses of anyone, child and adult alike, whom he judged to be even the slightest antagonistic towards young Yassar; and whether Burdon had spotted any of them in attendance at the chess match that evening. Burdon said he'd work at it through the rest of the night, if need be. Leschi thanked him and said he'd drop by the playfield in the morning.

That left the grim matter Leschi had pushed to a dark corner of his brain during the past hour of hectic activity.

The Teiraswans' house was brick, in a semi-private upper-middle income community three miles from Elysian Playfield. That the boy had walked or ridden his bike or a city bus that far in search of friends seemed to Leschi an additional tragedy.

At the sad news, the tall, olive, aloofly Eastern man's face didn't crack a muscle. His petite, black-haired wife shed tears as all mothers did over the loss of a son; but they were not the hysterical, bitter kind American mothers shed. Perhaps it was a saner, more philosophic way to face death, perhaps it was not. Leschi wasn't in a position or at an intellectual level to say. He was just a cop.

Daniel Barth was next. It seemed only fair for Leschi to notify him personally. His apartment on Millburleigh Street was in a pinched white stucco on a cramped, decaying middle-class street. A one-family, two-story dwelling now turned greedily into a two-unit apartment.

Inside the unlocked door a closed hallway led up a flight of steps where light showed in a yellow bar beneath a door. When Leschi knocked, the voice on the other side sounded efficient and neat and unusually small. Leschi got the curious,

silly vision of a midget calling to him from a pigeonhole in a postal letter case. "Who is it, please."

"The police, Mr. Barth."

The door went open as far as a chain-lock allowed. Leschi showed his wallet badge and identification card.

Barth was even shorter and more rotundly squat than his photographs had shown in the papers. And he still wore the same immaculately starched and ironed tan dress shirt and gold-and-white striped tie he had worn at all three chess matches.

His smile cracked just enough to be cordial but not enough to show any teeth. "Is it something in the neighborhood, Lieutenant? A prowler or burglar? This part of town is thick with them these days."

"No, it's nothing like that, Mr. Barth."

"I expected nothing less. The city is becoming a dark octopus of crime lately. I'm thinking of an apartment in the suburbs."

"It's out there, too," Leschi told him.

"Yes, I suppose it is." The false starts of his conversation seemed to Leschi just then a horrid extension of a man with a dead-end job in Civil Service.

Leschi accepted coffee. It came in dainty little demitasse cups. Barth efficiently made room on a low coffee table where there was a chessboard the pieces of which looked to Leschi like Korean stone.

"A replay of tonight's abomination," Barth explained, distastefully. "I should have beat him, but the papers will say he's an unbeatable genius and I should take my game to the retirement home. I pray he doesn't abandon that archaic Max Lange offense. I pray for it. Because I've found the defense that will turn that kind of concentration of forces into a miserable Chinese fire-drill."

"Mr. Barth, Yassar Teiraswan is dead."

Only the eyes jumped, but they jolted as though they'd been hit with a special electroshock treatment. "Dead? The boy is dead? How can that be? Only just a few hours ago, I was . . ."

"He was bludgeoned to death on the playfield around ten o'clock or perhaps a little before. Where were *you* at ten o'clock, Mr. Barth? You'll pardon me, but I have to ask."

"Yes. The investigation and all of that. I was here. Right here. In fact one of those pesky photographers from the newspapers barged in flashing pictures all over the place. That was around ten o'clock, as he will be able to corroborate."

"A photographer. Did you

think to ask his name and paper?"

"Why, yes, I did. I think he said his name was Grant Stone. The *Post-Record*. He said they wanted to do a feature story on me, with pictures. They did one on the boy after his first win. I think they're doing one on me out of courtesy. Down three games now, nobody's giving me the chance of a rank amateur against a Fischer."

Barth paused to regain a frame of proper grief. "The boy's been murdered? Dreadful thing—shocking. One of those playfield ruffians, do you think? That Elysian Playfield is thick with that rabble sort of element I hear. Lower middle class neighborhood. Very bad element."

"We're not overlooking the possibility," Leschi said.

"And well you *shouldn't*, Lieutenant," Barth said solidly, not wanting it mistaken how he felt about the Blackboard Jungle juveniles roaming the city streets taking to summer crime instead of summer jobs. "There was more than a little dislike for him in some quarters, I've heard. That aloof, superior Iranian attitude didn't endear him all that much to the hot-wire and purse-snatch set."

"Did his attitude endear him much to you, Mr. Barth?"

"Lieutenant, people's attitudes don't much affect a man when he gets to be my age."

"He hadn't gotten under your normally thick skin even a centimeter?" Leschi said. "That business tonight of his showing up for the match bare-chested, wearing cut-off jeans and a sloppy red gaucho hat, for instance."

"I complained in a proper spirit, Lieutenant Leschi, much in the manner of a father whose son comes to the supper table in his shorts."

"And that business of Yassar fidgeting with his chess pieces. That upset you as well."

"As it would have upset *any* rule-conscious master or expert player," countered Barth quickly, though his smallish dove-white little hands were becoming more restless in his lap and around his coffee cup. "I was perfectly within my rights lodging that complaint. The rules of the A.S.C.F. are more than adequately clear on the matter of distractions made by a player during his opponent's move time. Perfectly within my rights, sir."

His words were coming out now with edges on them, slender razor edges designed to keep an antagonist at a distance. Leschi had witnessed this change in attitude hundreds of times in criminal sus-

pects. They began to feel the guilt coming out to crawl atop their skin, as the paranoia woke from its dark slumber in the soul and began to pace the cave of the mind.

It was Daniel Barth who had killed young Yassar Teiraswan. And Sam Leschi knew it now as certainly as an eternal truth written at God's own hand across the sky.

"If I am being considered a suspect," came Barth's tight voice now, "which I sense I am, I'd like it known for the record that I lost a cuff-link at the chess match tonight." His look was level—almost defiant.

Leschi didn't speak. He wanted Barth to have all the rope he needed.

"I thought nothing of it before now, but the boy's death places that loss in an entirely new light."

"And what light might that be, Mr. Barth?"

"Why, the light of my possibly being made out the killer of this boy," said Barth, with indignance which rang falsely to Leschi, like a handful of lead coins being jingled.

"See here, Lieutenant, at tonight's match, I removed my cuff-links, a very natural thing for a chess player to do to allow him to move his arms freely over the board and table. When the match was concluded, I discovered one of the cuff-links missing from the table."

Leschi had never before known such seeming introversion to leap so suddenly to the level of grand theatrics.

"It seems overwhelmingly clear to me, Lieutenant Leschi, as it must to you, just why that cuff-link turned up missing. It was *taken* from that chess table by Yassar Teiraswan's killer to be placed next to his body. With the sole purpose of implicating me as his murderer."

"Your cuff-link was found next to the body tonight, yes," Leschi said. "As well as the murder weapon, a Park Department softball bat."

"Well there you have it, then," said Daniel Barth. "Find a young juvenile with a seething antagonism for Yassar Teiraswan, who is unable to account for his whereabouts this evening . . . and very likely you'll have the boy who stole that cuff-link and the boy who left it next to Teiraswan's body after he brutally murdered him."

A boy who couldn't account for his actions. Leschi chuckled impossibly to himself over that. In the Elysian Playfield area, a festering core of petty crime and vandalism, juveniles got high marks for *not* accounting for their actions.

But Sam Leschi's mind was

fastening on something else now, something he'd read in the local press about Daniel Barth, something telling Leschi it wanted to attach itself to this entire matter as motive far above and beyond anything so simple as natural rage and vengeance. And now it was becoming identified in Sam Leschi's mind.

"He looked at Daniel Barth firmly. "Mr. Barth, you have a book on chess out, haven't you? Published in hardback and paperback by a local book publishing firm?"

"By Pioneer Press, yes," said Barth, with expansive self-flattery, perhaps not even aware of baring his carefully guarded motive or that baring it could do him any harm. "It's titled *The Barth Standard Guide to Enjoying Chess—While Winning*. The book is nearly five years old now, but it still sells very well across the state, about ten-thousand copies a year, I'm told by my publishers."

"Which means a constant flow of royalty checks, I suppose," Leschi hedged.

"Small, but very regular, yes. You may not be aware, Lieutenant Leschi, though it's no guarded secret, but I am divorced. Which means I still support an ex-wife and three young sons living in another state. The extra money comes in handy, if you've ever discovered how much money postal supervisors make. More correctly, how little."

Leschi waited patiently until the smallish, unremarkable eyes registered that they both knew what Leschi was driving toward. A certain and humiliating chess defeat at the hands of a thirteen-year-old boy protege would mean certain and humiliating defeat for the local sales of his book.

When the frightened eyes said as much, admitted both men were aware that Daniel Barth possessed both emotional and financial motives to want Yassar Teiraswan dead, Leschi said no more. He simply smiled, shook Daniel Barth's perspiring hand and left.

Barth was a murderer temporarily off the hook and Daniel Barth knew it.

For the present there were a parcel of newspaper photographs to examine and a coroner's lab report still pending. Stephenson was the assistant medical coroner who'd drawn the duty until morning, a Dartmouth man known with a sort of perverse affection around the department as Dr. Strangelove, for the ponderous, self-absorbed amount of time he spent passing his judgments and theories on a corpse.

AT THE PHOTOLAB at the *Morning-Intelligencer*, Rolfe Hayes' work showed he wasn't exactly all that knocked out about chess. A pure Philistine.

He'd taken four shots. One of the two taken during the match showed Daniel Barth's cuff-links exactly where he said they were: removed and on the table next to his right elbow. The board arrangement indicated about mid-game. The other was a face-shot of Yassar Teiraswan. Child's play, with the child looking as though he wished Barth would simply cut his anguish short and quietly resign.

Hayes' other two shots were of Yassar Teiraswan alone, both depicting flashing Iranian teeth and the brimming confidence of a worldbeater. Strangely, Leschi found himself suddenly disliking this self-assured face without cause. Then he remembered the boy was even now staring up at the coroner stone cold dead and he felt instantly ashamed.

There was nothing of importance in the photos, simply Yassar Teiraswan amid a crowd of onlookers and fans at the conclusion of the match. No juvenile faces with deadly looks and nobody with a missing cuff-link exposed in his palm.

Leschi asked Hayes whether he'd taken any photographs at the two previous matches between Daniel Barth and the young, cocky Iranian. Hayes promptly replied, with all due malice and disgust, that he had not and would in fact rather do a ten-week time-lapse assignment on the discernable movements of a rock.

That left the *Post-Record* on the other side of town. It was the city's afternoon paper, but the front door was unlocked and the city room had a half dozen luke-warm bodies in it.

A young kid of a night city editor told Leschi he remembered Grant Stone passing through the calm an hour earlier, perhaps two. He couldn't be sure, he told Leschi, what with the way time flew when you were having fun. He told Leschi how to get to Photog and licked his lips.

"You with the homicide detail? Assault? Arson? You sitting on a story?"

Leschi told the kid he was a vice officer on a midnight pornography bust. That would keep his imagination active through a dull night and until the twenty-four hours were up and Leschi, by law, had to release the story and statistics on a dead Iranian boy who'd discovered the free enterprise system at the expense of his life.

Grant Stone wasn't anywhere in the Photog Department. The

developing areas were a line of cramped cubicles just a couple arm-lengths larger than walk-in lockers for major league baseball players.

Grant Stone's area looked worked-in. A tank was still filled with developer and a drawer containing photographic paper was left half-open. Leschi found a rubber squeegee on a drain table, its blade still wet with water and developer and there was a small magnifying glass nearby as well.

It looked very much to Leschi as if Grant Stone had gone hurriedly off on an urgent errand. Leschi thought he knew what that errand was. And Stone was going to get himself killed for it, if Leschi was right.

All Leschi needed to know now was who had done the telephoning. He picked up the receptionist's phone outside and got ahold of the *Post-Record's* switchboard operator. He asked her if she'd received any calls for the Photog Department in the past hour or so. Yes, she said. One, from a man. Who wanted to talk to Grant Stone.

Before Leschi left the Photog Department he went back to Grant Stone's cubicle and checked his work area for glossies or negatives of the previous chess matches. The assignment log at the receptionist's desk showed Stone had covered these as well. In Leschi's mind was running a phrase of something Daniel Barth had said: *"I removed my cuff-links. a very natural thing for a chess player to do . . ."*

In a drawer marked that it contained work done during the current month, Leschi found how natural was Daniel Barth's habit of removing his cuff-links for chess matches. In all, Grant Stone had snapped six photos of Barth at the table during the first two matches with Teira-swan. All of them showed Barth in the same tan dress shirt: starched, pressed and cuff-linked tight against his bony wrists.

Their removal during the third match had been a set-up by Barth. He knew he wasn't going to win or draw a single contest against Yassar Teira-swan. His mind, at this point, was not only cluttered with chess ploys of doubtful value against the genius Iranian, but cluttered and clouded with a developing plan for murder.

SAM LESCHI was in a race against the possibility of a second killing now and he flew across town under a siren.

Millburleigh Street was dark and quiet, packed with parked cars same as it had been on Leschi's earlier visit. He reached the 3500-block and

tried to remember which autos were newly arrived since the last time. There seemed to be three: a red sports car, a white Volks van and a foreign-make sports sedan. Leschi checked their hoods for warmth. The red sports job and the van were cool. The little import was warm, its engine crackling as it relaxed and cooled. Leschi didn't immediately see the pencil-sized hole in the left front window and wished he hadn't later.

Grant Stone was stretched out on the front seat, still alive. A bullet hole streamed a thin ribbon of blood in his neck, in front and just above his breastbone, which meant he'd turned toward the window at the last second and had caught a glimpse of the man who'd pulled the trigger.

He didn't have long to live, Leschi judged. Maybe five minutes, perhaps less. He was good at guessing these kinds of things. He'd seen a few.

"Stone," he said, his lips against Grant's upturned left ear on the car seat. "Who did it?"

The rate of pulse fluttered on Stone's neck in a final spurt of life. "C-chess player," came the weak, barely audible voice. "Strugll . . ."

The word seemed to want to form itself into *struggle*. Yes,

that was it! Both word and meaning. Grant Stone wasn't referring to a struggle with Barth. There hadn't been one. Barth had shot through the glass of a closed door. He meant the struggle Barth had with Yassar Teiraswan before Barth had worked a hand free to come down on the boy's head with the baseball bat.

"What about the struggle, Stone. Between Barth and Yassar Teiraswan, is that what you're trying to say?"

The human eye wouldn't have been able to say it saw the dying head nod. But Leschi felt it nod through his fingertips still placed on Stone's neck. "Was it something to do with the photographs you took tonight? Not the ones taken at the playfield, but the ones taken later inside Barth's apartment. Is that it, Stone?"

Again Leschi felt the muscles in Stone's neck flex and move as the jawbone quivered verti-

cally. "B-buttn . . s-r-r-t buttn. Yssr go-got i-i-t. A-a-ht park. Ir--ironnng boa-oard and . . . sew-sewngg kit. Inside app-mtt . . ."

The dying newspaper photographer was filling it all in as though summing up the important things of his life. The struggle at the playfield, where and at which Daniel Barth had dropped his own cuff-link, had resulted in an additional incident, quite unplanned and quite unforeseen.

Young Yassar Teiraswan, in his struggle with Barth for his life, had torn a button from Barth's shirt. He likely had also creased with his fingers and body the stiffly starched shirt itself.

After killing Teiraswan, Daniel Barth had fled the murder scene quickly, home to his apartment under the cover of evening darkness. The cuff-link was left behind near the body, the fingerprint-clean softball bat hurled into the shrubbery, all unseen. He'd committed what he thought had been a perfect murder.

Perfect, that was, until the bright light of his apartment on Millburleigh Street was shed on the situation. The boy's ferocious grappling for life had pinched and creased that immaculate, highly starched tan dress shirt in a thousand tiny places. Worse, a button had been torn from its front. But nothing Barth couldn't remedy, good as new, which he set about to do that instant.

A short while later, he was visited by Grant Stone of the *Post-Record*, running down his follow-up story on Barth, the fading city champion. Stone took his photographs, asked his few questions and left, apparently none the wiser about having interviewed and photographed the killer of the young opponent, whom Grant Stone did not yet know was dead.

There was nothing startling or revealing in Stone's initial batch of photos taken at Elysian Playfield. By this time he'd still not heard about the killing of Yassar Teiraswan, no one knew about it yet except Leschi, a few policemen and coroner staffers.

Stone had yawned and set to developing the photos he'd taken at Daniel Barth's apartment when Barth called him at the newspaper through the paper's switchboard. He wanted this photographs and negatives from Stone, not all of them, just those taken at Barth's apartment. The terror and desparation must have shown through in Barth's voice, because Stone sensed this was something more than a request from a reclusive, publicity shy chess

player. He had utterly no idea what was so vital or valuable about the photographs, but he wasn't going to give away anything until he filled in some of the blanks.

Grant Stone hadn't agreed, not right away. Likely he told Barth he'd get back to him by phone. From somewhere, from someone, he'd than found out about young Yassar Teiraswan's death. From the boy's parents, perhaps, who could have called the paper, or from the coroner's office. Any one of a dozen sources were possible. That was all he needed. He souped his shots and took a closer examination of them under a magnifying glass. And two-and-two made a nice, neat four for putting the pressure on a murderer.

Stone was now heaving his lungs for a final precious few gulps of air. "T-took photographs. Negg-t-tives, too. O-onnly a-a-sked f-f-for a th-thousand dollll . . ."

"You poor, dumb . . . you can't blackmail a poor man, don't you know that, Stone? Didn't you know Barth was divorced and sending everything to support his ex-wife and kids. He couldn't get together a thousand dollars if he sold everything he owned and borrowed the extra money from a friend."

"H-he's in-inside appprt--mnt. Brnn-ing."

"What, Stone?"

"Apprt-mnt . . . bur-bur . . ."

"Burning the photos and negatives?"

Leschi's fingertips felt the neck muscles stretch. Up and down. And then Grant Stone was dead.

When Sam Leschi broke into Daniel Barth's apartment, he smelled smoke coming from the dining room. He tore around the corner and saw a thick, common dinner plate on a dining room table. The plate was piled high with glossy photographs and opaque negatives, all smoldering and smoking but not yet being licked by flame. The poor, desparate, incompetant guy. He wasn't even able to do that right.

When Leschi reached out and jerked them from the plate, Daniel Barth made no move to interfere. He even handed over the pistol.

"The boy was about to take from me the last ounce of pride I had left, my chess. I was able to live without my wife and children, even without my dreams of a successful career at something besides what life dealt me. But not my chess and my stature at it. And my book. After this defeat, my book wouldn't have even been worth the paper it was printed on."

"And Stone. . ." Leschi prompted the beaten man.

"Stone found out about the killing from somewhere, from the police probably." Daniel Barth was crying like a child now. "And then he saw the photographs he'd taken here at the apartment earlier. He put it all together . . ."

". . . and then asked for a thousand dollars from you to forget it all," Leschi said.

Dismally, Daniel Barth nodded and went back into the living room. Sam Leschi let him go and searched through the undestroyed photos for those taken at the apartment. They weren't hard to identify. There were two left that had been taken in Barth's cramped living room. Cramped, yes, but not so restricting as to prevent the unfolding and setting up of an ironing board and iron with which to press out all the wrinkles made in Barth's shirt by Yassar Teiraswan before he died. And on the arm of the over-stuffed, elephantine chair, an open sewing box used by Barth to sew a fresh button on his shirt.

All there in the background of Stone's pictures.

There was still a button to search for on that playfield, but it could wait until daylight. Leschi collected the photos and put the pistol in his suit coat pocket and went back into the living room.

Daniel Barth had his sports jacket on, all ready to go. His tan dress shirt glistened without a wrinkle on it anywhere, and Leschi wondered if the coroner had found starch particles under Yassar Teiraswan's fingernails.

"The ironic thing of it is," said Barth, "I would have given that photographer the thousand dollars if I'd had it." He put a finger against his chest. "But I can't even afford a perfect match in a button, Lieutenant."

Leschi nodded. He'd noticed the instant he'd turned into the dining room and spotted Barth. The mismatch had even shown in the photo, to which Grant Stone could have attested were he still alive. Leschi didn't have to be reminded of that, because as he took Daniel Barth back down the street to his unmarked car, his sight fell again on the bullethole in the window of the foreign import, as did the glazed eye of Daniel Barth.

BUY "MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE" EVERYWHERE

O'FLAHERTY'S WAKE

by

WILLIAM JEFFREY

Carter was surprised by the mortuary night stalkers—but he had a surprise for them!

WHEN I PASSED through the archway into the mortuary's transit room, there were two elderly men looking into Charley O'Flaherty's open coffin.

I stopped and stared at them incredulously. It was two o'clock in the morning. The only light in the room was a pale bulb burning on the rear wall and the two men appeared to be holding a whispered conference between pulls at a glass jug apparently containing the product of the grape.

One of them was tall and cadaverously thin, with a fringe of red hair ringing his lower scalp, and the other was short and thick-bodied and had a face like a soulful bulldog. They were both wearing patched sports coats and tattered trousers, and the thin one was outfitted in very old open-toed

tennis shoes without benefit of socks. It was a little like looking at an old-time Mutt and Jeff vaudeville team.

They must have sensed me standing there. They both turned to face me directly before I could move. We stood there like that, staring open-mouthed at each other, and finally the one who looked like a bulldog said, "Who would you be?" in a thick brogue.

"Who the hell would *you* be?" I countered.

"Paddy McHugh," he said, "And this here's me friend Brian Aloysius Flynn. And yourself, now?"

I drew myself up, regaining some of my composure. "Thaddeus Carter," I said. "I own the EternaRest Funeral Home. I was working late, as I often do. Here, why am *I* explaining anything to *you*? What are you doing here? What do you want?"

"We come to pay our last respects to our old compatriot and countryman, Charley O'Flaherty," McHugh said.

"Seeing as how there was no services for poor Charley, rest his soul," Flynn said.

"He died in an alcoholic ward," I told them. "Alone."

"Aye, but not friendless," McHugh said. "We would of come right away if we could of, but we was unfortunately incapacitated."

"That's a fact," Flynn said. "We was spending thirty days as guests of the city."

"We just got out this morning."

"So we came tonight to say our last to Charley."

I cleared my throat. "Breaking and entering is against the law, good intentions or not."

"Well now, did you hear this Mr. Carter, Paddy?" Flynn said. "He thinks we be common hooligans, come to his parlor for some wrong-doin'."

McHugh shook his head sorrowfully. "Sure'n that ain't the truth of it. We only come to pay our last, like we said. We read about Charley being here in the Obituaries."

"Aye, last night's *Morning Chronicle*."

"The truth be known," McHugh said, "we was merely leaning' against the window out there in the back, our faces pressed to the glass hoping for a wee glimpse of poor Charley, when she fairly flew open as if by some leprecaun's magic."

"It happened that way, sure enough," Flynn agreed.

"I said to Brian, Brian, I said, 'tis a sign from the Good Lord Himself. It was meant to be."

Flynn lowered his head reverently. "There be more things in heaven and earth," he intoned.

"I find this all very touching," I said, "but—"

"We haven't touched a thing, no sir," McHugh interrupted. "Nary a candle nor a flower."

"We just come to pay our last to poor Charley," Flynn said.

"Only Charley don't seem to be in this here coffin with his sainted name on it," McHugh said.

"He surely don't."

"Would you be tellin' us where is, Mr. Carter?"

I folded my hands in front of me and looked benignly at them. "Mr. O'Flaherty," I said solemnly, "has been cremated."

"No!" McHugh said.

"Saints preserve us!" Flynn said.

"It was the wishes of his only relative, an Uncle Liam, who was notified at the time of his passing."

"We didn't know poor Charley had an Uncle Liam," McHugh said.

"He never mentioned the name," Flynn said.

"Oh yes," I told them. "He's a very old man, with a modest retirement income out in California. He couldn't afford to have Mr. O'Flaherty transported out to the coast for burial, but neither could he bear the thought of his only nephew being interred in Pauper's Field. Thus, he sent word to us to have Mr. O'Flaherty cremated."

McHugh betook of the glass jug sadly and passed it on to Flynn. Flynn drank and handed it back to McHugh. I stepped past them, glancing briefly at the plain coffin with its scarlet satin lining, and went to a series of niches in the rear wall. I reached into one and gingerly removed a tall, Grecian-style silver urn.

"Is that—?" Flynn began.

"It is," I said.

"Poor Charley!"

"Such a fine lad to come to this," McHugh said.

Flynn took the urn from me, holding it devoutly, and peered at the inscribed name on its front. "Charles Aloysius O'Flaherty," he read. He snuffled softly, opened the cover, and looked inside. "Goodbye me old and true friend."

He handed the urn to McHugh, who also looked inside and said goodbye to Charley.

McHugh closed the cover and gave the urn back to me, swallowing heavily several times. Flynn rubbed at his eyes, which had become rather moist and swollen. I replaced the urn in the niche and smiled sadly at them.

"Well, Paddy me boy," Flynn said, "we've done what we come to."

"Aye," McHugh said. "Poor Charley's gone to his final reward, and 'tis more than deserved, too."

"There'll be no replacin' him in our hearts."

"That's the truth, it is." McHugh nodded.

"Well, we won't be troubling you no more, Mr. Carter," Flynn said to me. "You've been most understandin', and we surely do appreciate it."

"Understanding is our motto at EternaRest," I said.

"We'll not soon be forgettin' you," McHugh said, and he and Flynn started across the room and along the hallway leading to the rear door and windows. I followed them, standing aside as they climbed one by one over the sill and into the small rear yard.

"We'll surely be saying nice words about your fine establishment to all our friends still able to raise an elbow," Flynn said.

"Thank you, gentlemen."

They waved, and I watched them fade into the darkness. When they were gone I shut the window and made sure that it was securely locked. Then I sighed, audibly, and returned to the transit room.

I thought I had handled the situation rather well, at least as well as the real Thaddeus Carter—who was Benny One-Eye's brother-in-law—might have handled it. When Benny had given me the job of guarding the half-million in very hot banknotes being shipped to his West Coast fence, I hadn't expected this kind of problem. It was a lucky thing, all right, that I had gone for a glass of water before the arrival of McHugh and Flynn otherwise, there might have been definite repercussions.

I sighed again and resumed my former position, closing my eyes for another few hours of sleep before the railroad freight people arrived. The currency rustled softly beneath the coffin's lining as I reached up to lower the lid over me; I had to admit that even with McHugh and Flynn, this inside job was one of the softest I had ever had in my life.

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"Crazy" Joe had looks, a crude charm and the ability to inspire loyalty in his henchmen, plus the cunning of a hyena. He might have risen to the top rung of the Mafia ladder. But his lack of judgment condemned him to be a maverick, leaving a twenty-year trail of corpses behind him—including, ultimately, his own bloody bullet riddled body.

CRAZY JOE GALLO

THE GUN-MAD GANGSTER

by DAVID MAZROFF

ON THURSDAY evening, April 6, 1972, Crazy Joe Gallo decided to celebrate his 43rd birthday in style. The party wound up at Umberto's Clam House at Mulberry and Hester Streets, a section of Little Italy on New York's Lower East Side. The time was three-thirty Friday morning.

At that time, three gunmen, rods in hand, walked into Umberto's Clam House and began firing wildly at Crazy Joe Gallo. The slugs bounced off walls. The men and women in Gallo's party, and the other patrons in the restaurant, yelled and screamed as they ducked for cover under tables and behind chairs.

Joey Gallo did not earn the appellation of "Crazy" without good reason. He was the epitome of the classic proverbial saying, *"Fools walk in where angels fear to tread."* He took on the powerful Joe Profaci, Joe Bonnano and Carlo Gambino mobs with only a mere handful of hoods and his two brothers, Lawrence and Albert—and at a time when Carlo Gambino was the most powerful Mafia boss in the United States with more than

five hundred hoods under his command. The Profaci and Bonnano mobs were almost as strong.

What was more provocative was the fact that Gambino, cunning, a schemer, shrewd and Machiavellian in his planning and plotting, was out to take over the Profaci and Bonnano mobs. Inadvertently, Gambino's secret plan helped Gallo for a time, as he took over slices of territory and rackets controlled by both Profaci and Bonnano.

Before he lost most of his hair, Joey Gallo was considered handsome. He had a strong face with regular features, dressed neatly, spoke in even tones and had guts, the kind it takes to move in against organized Mafia bosses. Aptly described by a court appointed psychiatrist as a dangerous psychopath with homicidal tendencies, Gallo said, "That guy really knows his stuff, except for one thing. I don't just *have* tendencies. I carry them out."

In his youth, Joey Gallo tried to emulate Tommy Udo, a movie character depicted by Richard Widmark in a film costarring Victor Mature. Tommy Udo was a vicious gangster with a maniacal laugh who pushed old ladies in wheel chairs down flights of stairs. Joey Gallo saw the picture *Kiss of Death*, several times, bought several striped suits, black silk shirts, white silk ties and practiced the swaggering walk and the maniacal laugh.

At parties he would point a forefinger and thumb at someone, yell, *"Bang!"* and then laugh in what he believed to be a perfect imitation of Widmark's Tommy Udo. *"Tommy Udo!"* he would say. "Perfect, huh?" No one cared to dispute him.

In the Fifties, Joey, his older brother Larry and his younger brother, Albert, nicknamed "Kid Blast," had been common soldiers and prime hit men in the Profaci army.

Profaci was a ruthless, powerful and highly experienced hood and gangster but he had a major flaw in his makeup. He paid off poorly to those who performed services for him, just as often didn't pay off at all. It proved in time to be his downfall. He could have become the *Capo di tutti Capo*, boss of all bosses, instead of Carlo Gambino after Albert Anastasia was assassinated, had he played along with the Gallos.

Carlo Gambino wanted Anastasia's "family" and his rackets. He didn't want to be involved in Anastasia's murder, however, so he talked it over with Profaci, insinuating that if Anastasia were hit the chances

were good the Commission would give Profaci the territory. Profaci fell for it. There began then the plotting to knock off Anastasia, one of the most powerful men in the New York Mafia organization. Profaci assigned the hit to Crazy Joe Gallo.

Gallo was taken aback.

"You want me to hit Anastasia?" he asked. "What the hell for?"

"I've got my reasons," Profaci said.

"Yeah? Well, I've got mine for passing it up. You know what? There would be a hundred guns looking for me an hour after I hit him. How the hell do you think I'll be able to get away from that?"

"Easy. I'll be behind you. Besides, when you do this you will come in for some consideration from me."

"How much consideration?"

"Leave it to me."

Gallo stared hard at Profaci. "You know something, Mr. Profaci? I smell a double-cross. I hit Anastasia and then I get hit, and . . . maybe by somebody in this family." He stared harder at Profaci. "Well? How does that sound to you?"

"Joey, Joey, for Chrissake, would I do that to the best hit man I got? Use your head. You do this and you'll come out okay. You have my word."

CRAZY JOE GALLO

Gallo thought it over for a while then nodded. "Okay. I'll hit him. You line it up."

Profaci got in touch with Carlo Gambino at Gambino's home and the two talked it over.

"Crazy Joe will hit him," Profaci said. "All I have to do is line it up so he can catch Anastasia alone and position him. That may be hard to do."

Gambino shook his head. "Stay with it. You'll get a call."

The machinations that followed might have rivalled the devil's own malevolent plotting toward the destruction of saints and idols. Accordingly, Albert Anastasia went to the barber

shop in the Park Central Hotel on this morning of October 25, 1957, and seated himself in a chair.

The setup was a complex picture of cross and double-cross. Albert Anastasia at the moment was in bad with the Commission for several reasons. First, Anastasia, himself a ruthless killer, had knocked off his boss Vincent Mangano in 1951 and taken over his "family" and his rackets. Next, he had split with Vito Genovese because Genovese had ordered Willie Moretti's murder in New Jersey and then appointed Gerardo "Jerry" Catena as his underboss in charge of the New Jersey territory. The picture got dirtier.

On June 17, 1957, Frank "Don Cheech" Scalice, one of Albert Anastasia's top lieutenants, was shot and killed as he shopped at a fruit stand in the Bronx. The two killers escaped in a waiting automobile in front of the fruit stand. Scalice was a heavy dealer in narcotics and was reaping a fortune. The information was that Scalice had "forgotten" to cut Anastasia in on the profits and so Anastasia had him liquidated.

Another story was that Vito Genovese had Scalice killed as a warning to Anastasia not to interfere in the argument Genovese was having with Frank Costello over gambling and other interests. Anastasia and Costello were close friends. A third story was that Scalice was selling memberships in the Mafia, something that had been closed since 1954.

Soldiers could be hired but they were to remain "outside" the inner circles. The word was that Scalice had been selling memberships for as high as $50,000 and forgetting to mention it to the Commission. It was believed, too, that Anastasia had cut in on the membership sales. Thus, anyone just might have ordered the hit on Anastasia.

The truth of the matter was that the Commission had ordered Anastasia to hit Scalice, which he did. Next, Scalice's brother Joeseph began making noises about getting Anastasia because he had learned that Anastasia was responsible for the killing of his brother. Joseph Scalice did all his talking from a hideout and through an intermediary.

Anastasia sent word to him that he was willing to let bygones be bygones and that Joseph could come out of hiding and take up where he left off in Anastasia's family. Foolishly, Joseph came out of hiding. On September 7, he disappeared from the face of the earth. The Scalices had friends. Killers. No

one was too tough to eat bullets and live, not even Anastasia.

Anastasia was covered with hot towels when Crazy Joe Gallo and, presumably, his older brother Larry walked into the barber shop with guns drawn. They pushed the barber aside and, while customers, barbers and the manicurist watched in fascination, the two gunmen riddled Anastasia with bullets. Anastasia threw the towel from his face as the first slugs hit him.

He staggered forward, reached for support, grasped the shelf in front of him on which were bottles of lotions, his weight tearing it down. Bottles fell all over the floor. The gunmen fired three or four times more, turned and walked quickly from the shop. One of their guns was found in the foyer leading into the hotel. The other was found in a trash can on the corner. The killers disappeared in the crowd. Where was Anastasia's bodyguard? He was off on an errand.

Some time later, information came to the police that Carlo Gambino and another Anastasia aide, Joseph "Joe Bandy" Biondo, had agreed to set Anastasia up for the hit. Crazy Joe Gallo and his brother were never suspected.

Joe Profaci did not get Anastasia's "family" or his territory and his rackets. Carlo Gambino did. Profaci completely underestimated Gambino's power and machinations. Profaci reneged on his promise to give the Gallos consideration. He gave them a little but not what Crazy Joe expected. Crazy Joe bided his time.

He told his brother, "Wait. We'll give that sonofabitch plenty of rope. He's sure to hang himself."

In the fall of 1959, Crazy Joe and his brother were given the contract on Frank "Frankie Shots" Abbatemarco, a banker for Profaci in the policy rackets. Abbatemarco was suspected of holding out on collections, a fatal sin. The Gallos caught up with Abbatemarco and shot him three times in the head.

Crazy Joe now went to Profaci and made his demands.

"We've done a lot for you, Mr. Profaci, and all you've given us is a lot of conversation. The blue chips are down now. We want some action, good action."

"Yeah, like what?"

"We want the gambling, loan-sharking and narcotics in East New York."

"That's a pretty big demand. Look, you and your brothers are the only ones who don't kick in that twenty-five dollars dues every week. That's something, isn't it?"

"Yeah? Peanuts. I'm sick and tired of talking to you about our end, Joe."

"*Joe?*" Profaci echoed. "You call me *Joe*? What the hell kind of respect is that? I'm a Don, Goddammit. You give me some respect!"

"I'll give it to you when you serve up something besides a lot of talk. That's all you've given us. Either we get what we ask or we go out on our own, all the way. How do you like that?"

Profaci's eyes narrowed. "Go ahead. You won't last a hot minute. Who the hell do you think you are?"

"I know who I am. The trouble is *you* don't know who I am."

"We'll both find out soon enough. Go ahead. Go out on your own. I'll give you about a week. After that—" He pulled a forefinger across his throat.

Crazy Joe spat on Profaci's feet. "That's my answer, you cheap bastard!" He turned and walked out without turning around.

Profaci called Carlo Gambino for a meeting. They met at the home of Gambino.

Secretly, Gambino was pleased at this turn of events. He could see a gang war breaking out between the Profaci and Gallo factions. He knew, too, that when Profaci was called before the Commission to explain the cause of it, he would not be able to offer a reasonable explanation other than the truth—that he had failed to honor his commitment to Gallo.

Gambino said, "It's not a very good situation, Joe. That guy is a nut. I remember when he kept a young lion in his home on President Street. He used to take the animal for walks. The damn thing scared the hell out of people. A guy like that is liable to do anything. It looks bad."

"What's the solution? I don't want a war. The Commission wouldn't like it." He was silent a few moments. "And I don't want to give in to that bastard. He spat at my feet! I want him dead!"

Gambino nodded in understanding. Spitting at a Don was the ultimate insult. It had to be avenged. He said, "Why not just sit back for a while and see what Gallo does? You can make your move then."

Profaci nodded. There was nothing else to say. He thanked Gambino and left, a worried expression on his face.

In February, 1961, Crazy Joe Gallo and a half-dozen of his toughest hoods put the snatch on Joseph "The Fat Man" Magliocco, Profaci's brother-in-law and underboss, on Frank Profaci, Joe's brother, and on two

very powerful aides and bodyguards, Salvatore "Sally The Sheik" Mussachia and John Scimone. Gallo also tried to snatch Joe Profaci himself. However, Joe was tipped off that he was marked for the snatch and took a hasty departure to Florida and the protection of the mobs there.

It was a sanctuary he didn't enjoy too much because he was told that Gallo had sent two gunmen to Florida to kill him. Profaci surrounded himself with a dozen bodyguards. When he sat at the poolside, his bodyguards were all around him. In restaurants, the group sat at tables against a wall and in full view of the entrance from where they scanned everyone who came in.

SEPARATE ROOMS

The four hostages, meanwhile, were held in separate hotel rooms under heavy guard. Gallo sent word to Profaci that he wanted a big piece of the action, every racket. Either that or the four hostages would be killed, one at a time, their heads cut off and sent to him parcel post prepaid.

Profaci called Gallo from Florida.

"You turn loose my men, Gallo, and I'll come to terms with you."

"Crap, Joe. You don't keep your word. I want more guarantee than that, more insurance. I don't want any reprisals, no war, just a nice agreement that we will get what we're entitled to."

"I'm promising it to you. What else do you want me to do?" His tone was edgy. He hated to bend to this hoodlum who had been so disrespectful of his position as to spat at him. He knew, however, that he would have to give in, for the time being, at least. Later, when the opportunity presented itself, he would have him killed, and many of his mob too.

He said, "I give you my word again. I will send word that you are to take over East New York. You can move in today. I will make the call after I hang up."

"Okay. We'll move in this afternoon. If all goes right I'll release your men."

"Okay. It's a deal."

"No retribution?"

"None."

"No gun play?"

"None."

"Okay. I'm telling you this, though. If there is any kind of move to take back East New York on your part, I'll go after you first. That's my promise."

Gallo didn't wait for an answer. He hung up the phone and turned to the several members

of the mob who were in the room. "It's all set. We've got East New York. We'll begin our moves this afternoon."

There were a lot of shouting and laughing and ribald remarks about Profaci and then Gallo outlined the plans for taking over.

Once again, Profaci remained in character. After thinking it over, he told himself that he could not bend to this bum, this outlaw who dared to spit at him. He issued orders to his men to allow Gallo to take over for the time but to begin a war of attrition, to grab Gallo's best men and kill them.

"Be very careful," Profaci urged. "Make it look like someone else did it. If Gallo complains to you, I want you to deny it. To tell him that you will help him find out who did the killing."

"Sure, Mr. Profaci. I understand."

Gallo took over East New York, moved in with a vengeance. He asked for more tribute in the protection racket and raised the price on street peddlers who were hustling narcotics. Bookies were made to pay a thousand dollars each in advance as a gesture of good faith, and those bookies who ran large rooms and did a daily business in the thousands had to pay from twenty to twenty-five per cent higher fees for protection and the wire service.

There was a lot of screaming, but after several bookies were beaten the rest fell into line. There were appeals to Profaci, who had returned from Florida after the release of his men.

He told everyone to keep cool, that he would straighten things out shortly. "Just continue as you are. I promise you everything will be taken care of very soon."

Profaci's first answer to Gallo was typical. In August, 1961, Joseph "Joe Jelly" Gioelli went deep-sea fishing, a form of recreation to which he was devoted. Gioelli didn't return from this trip. What did was Gioelli's coat wrapped around a fish. The fish and coat were thrown from a speeding car in front of a favorite hangout of Gallo's. This was one of the scenes that was depicted in Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*.

Next came an invitation for Larry Gallo to meet John Scimone at the Sahara Lounge in Brooklyn, to get some good news and the first payment on a deal the Gallos had made on a shipment of narcotics. What Larry Gallo got was a couple of drinks and a noose around his neck. He would have died right there except for the fact that a cop making his routine check appeared in the doorway, his

partner behind him. A couple of shots were fired at the cops, one of the slugs striking the cop behind the first cop who entered. Larry Gallo escaped with his life.

This incident erupted the Gallo-Profaci war.

Crazy Joe Gallo knew that he was facing superior troops in Joe Profaci's mob. He decided to go to "the mattresses" and accordingly, holed up on the second floor of a brick-front building at 49-51 President Street in Brooklyn, referred to by Gallo's men as *The Dormitory*.

In The Dormitory, the Gallos surrounded themselves with mattresses, an arsenal of weapons—handguns, sawed-off shotguns and submachine-guns—and a hoard of food. This, too, was another scene depicted in the movie *The Godfather*, actual happenings fictionalized by Mario Puzo. What Puzo didn't include were Verdi's operas, which Joey Gallo loved and played constantly on a record player.

The casualties mounted, but most of the victims were Gallo hoods. There were about a dozen killings, ten of them Gallos and two, minor members, Profacis. The police moved in then in an effort to stop the slaughter on the city's streets.

The McClellan Committee began looking into the history of New York's organized crime. Raymond V. Martin, Assistant Chief of Brooklyn (South) Detectives, testified before the Committee.

Detective Martin declared, "According to information I have, it seems that Joe Profaci, one of the Dons in the Organization who has a large 'family,' meaning soldiers, underbosses, enforcers and such others who keep the rackets moving smoothly, made promises to Crazy Joe Gallo he didn't keep."

"What sort of promises, Mr. Martin?" a member of the Committee asked.

"Profaci was to turn over certain territories to the Gallos for services rendered, which he failed to do. This is what this war is all about?"

"Can you say what kind of services the Gallos rendered?"

"You name it. Everything from muscle, mayhem and murder."

He paused, went on after a few seconds. "Profaci, as I have learned, is stingy. He hates to give up anything to anyone outside his immediate group and to members of his blood family. Profaci gives most of the good things to his relatives and good friends."

"Is there a way to stop these killings, Mr. Martin?"

Detective Martin sighed.

"Yes. Get something on Crazy Joe Gallo and send him away for a time. That would do it."

"You don't mean to frame him—that's the term, I believe—on some sort of charge?"

Detective Martin grinned. "That wouldn't be legal, sir. Gallo has done, and will do again, many illegal things—felonies. Anything along the line would be enough to put him away for a long time. I hope we can catch him at it."

Another witness who testified before the McClellan Cimmittee was a former New York Police official, Ralph Salerno. He testified that, "The opening gun in this war actually goes back to 1959, when a top hood in Profaci's organization named Frank Abbatemarco was killed, presumably by the Gallos, on orders of Profaci, who believed that Abbatemarco was holding out on proceeds from rackets he was given to control.

"My information is that the Gallos, Joseph Giorelli, and Carmine Persico, Jr., were the killers. They expected to be given Abbatemarco's territory. Profaci, instead, gave it to several of his close friends."

This was essentially true. Furthermore, Crazy Joe had thought that Profaci and Magliocco would be sent to prison as a result of their conviction for obstructing justice in the Apalachin meeting. Gallo figured that, while Profaci and Magliocco were in prison, they would be running things. However, the Apalachin conviction was set aside and, when it became apparent that Profaci and Magliocco were not going to prison, Crazy Joe decided that drastic action was called for.

When the Gallos put the snatch on Magliocco and the others, Joe Profaci appealed to the Commission for an okay to kill the Gallos, Persico and Giorelli.

The National Commission at that time was composed of Sam Giancana, alias Sam Mooney of Chicago, Stefano Magaddino of Buffalo, Angelo Bruno of Philadelphia, Carlo Gambino of New York, Tommy Lucchese of New York, Vito Genovese and Profaci.

The vote went against Profaci. Here again, the Machievellian hand of Gambino came into play. Gambino and Lucchese saw the fall of Profaci in the war. Crazy Joe Gallo would surely try to murder him in an effort to take over. Gallo wasn't big enough to oppose the combined strength of Gambino and Lucchese's organizations so, with Profaci out of the way, the simple matter of disposing of the Gallos would be routine.

After that, Gambino and

Lucchese would take over. That was two votes against Profaci. Magaddino distrusted the association between Profaci and Joe Bonnanno and he didn't like the way Bonnano had muscled into Canada. He considered Canada his province. That was three votes against Profaci. Sam Giancana, a shrewd and intelligent operator, saw that a wild shooting war was going to ensue and didn't want any part of it. Bruno felt the same way. That was five votes against him.

The decision of the Commission was that Profaci's problems with the Gallos were "Internal" and Profaci would have to deal with them himself.

The war that exploded, according to information given to the McClellan Commission, resulted in nine men being killed, most of them Gallo hoods. Four Gallo hoods disappeared and twenty were wounded. Larry Gallo was shot at several times but escaped with minor injuries.

Thereafter, Profaci was able to lure three of Gallos lieutenants to his side. They were Carmine Persico, Jr., Nicholas "Jiggs" Forlano, and John Scimone. Profaci sent the three out to kill Crazy Joe Gallo. That was when Carmen Persico disappeared. He turned up later. Not so Joseph "Jelly"

JOE PROFACI

Giorelli. He may be at the bottom of the East River, weighted down with massive hunks of iron and steel.

Crazy Joe Gallo knew that he was fighting an opponent whose power was far superior to his own in men, influence and alliances with other "families." One of these was headed by Joe Bonnano, at the time a minor bookie with ambition who nevertheless had been able to gain several territories through cajoling and promises of undying loyalty to whomever he beseeched for help, among them Profaci, Vito Genovese and Carlo Gambino.

Little by little, he built up a "family" of his own and moved in on other rackets. You had to hand it to him—he was a very sharp operator, and so was his son, Bill, a handsome young man. Joe Bonnano, as was expected, lent his help to Profaci. Crazy Joe could turn to no one. He was an independent, an outsider, trying to muscle in on an important "family" in the Organization.

What he didn't know, of course, was that the Commission voted against Profaci and that Profaci was on his own. However, even on his own he had too many guns for Gallo. But Gallo had guts, more than Profaci ever dreamed of possessing.

Crazy Joe took several of his toughest guns with him on forays into Profaci territory, wrecked his bookie joints and saloons, smashed the juke boxes, shot and wounded or killed anyone connected with Profaci.

POLICE PROTECTION

Profaci retaliated. He sent carloads of killers into President Street to look for Gallos or Gallo men. Finally, in order to prevent further bloodshed and the mass slaughter of Gallo hoods, the police and the FBI surrounded the building where the Gallos had holed up and took them out under police protection!

Shortly thereafter, in 1963, Joe Profaci died of natural causes. The Gallos, faithful to their upbringing as Catholics, went to church en masse to pray for the salvation of Joe Profaci's soul and to beg God to keep his spirit within the confines of heaven. If, however, God didn't see fit to accept the likes of Profaci in heaven, then it was okay with the Gallos that God send him to hell.

Joe Profaci named Magliocco as his successor. Magliocco was weak. He had no stomach for the kind of death struggle that had ensued with the Gallos. He wanted peace and the opportunity to walk the streets without fear. He called Crazy Joe for a meeting on neutral ground.

The meeting was held in a small Italian restaurant on the Lower East Side. Magliocco gave the Gallos whatever they requested, and what they requested was control of East New York in the Brooklyn section. Magliocco readily agreed. Several months later, Magliocco died of a heart attack.

With the death of Magliocco, Joseph Colombo, Sr., took over the gang. He held a meeting with Crazy Joe and agreed to honor the commitment made by Magliocco. He felt that maintaining peace with the Gallos

would be a feather in his cap and he would thus be voted into the Commission seat vacated by Profaci. Instead, that vacancy was filled by Joseph Zerilli of Detroit, an astute, tough operator who was highly respected in the Organization.

Joseph Bonnano decided to bide his time. He was certain in his mind that another seat on the Commission would become vacant sooner or later and that he would be voted in. He told Crazy Joe that, once he got on the Commission, he would see to it that Crazy Joe was given every consideration in the matter of expanded territory.

The Gallos promised loyalty to Joe Bonnano in exchange for his friendship and, more important as a result of that friendship, his concessions to them. The Profaci-Gallo war ceased and things were peaceful for a time. Then things happened fast.

In December, 1961, Crazy Joe was arrested by a squad of cops who came to President Street for the purpose. It seems that Crazy Joe had a penchant for wisecracks which contained both veiled and actual threats. He attempted to shake down a café owner by offering him protection.

"I'd like to think it over," the café owner replied.

"Sure," Gallo replied, "take three months, in the hospital, on me."

Three detectives happened to be sitting at a table nearby and overheard the remark. Joe was charged with attempted extortion, tried, convicted and sentenced to a term of seven to fourteen years.

Larry Gallo took over the leadership of the mob. Under his direction, the mob's power in the Organization grew. In 1968, Larry died of cancer. Albert "Kid Blast" Gallo took over. He didn't have the leadership ability of either Larry or Joe and the mob's power and influence lagged and ultimately deteriorated. The remnants of them waited around for Joe's release.

In prison, Crazy Joe became friendly with several black cons who were leaders of the black contingent in Attica, as he did when he was in Auburn. He threatened to beat up a white barber in Attica who refused to cut a black con's hair. Crazy Joe was making plans.

He figured to enroll several powerful blacks in his mob after he was released and was doing some fancy recruiting among the toughest blacks in the joint. Many of the white cons referred to him as a "nigger lover" and, with high tension in Attica between whites and blacks, Crazy Joe's affinity

for the blacks didn't make him too popular. Three white cons stole into his cell one evening and tried to strangle him. He beat them off.

On November 4, 1970, Crazy Joe singlehandedly stopped a riot between white and black cons, and rescued a guard who had been taken hostage by a group of black cons who had beaten the guard unconscious.

OUT ON PAROLE

Several weeks later, a letter was sent to the State Parole Board on behalf of Crazy Joe Gallo describing his herioc act in rescuing the guard. The Parole Board was duly impressed. At a special hearing, he was granted a parole and in March, 1971, Crazy Joe Gallo came home to South Brooklyn.

At a coming out party the gang threw for him, he announced that he was going to bring blacks into the gang. Some of the members were violently against it.

"You do that, Joe," one of them said, "and before you know it those guys will take over. That's the way they work. It's just like the block-buster tactic. They buy one house in a neighborhood at a big price and then buy up the rest at below their value. They will come in with us, learn all the ropes, and then take over because they'll be recruiting their own men behind your back."

"No way," Crazy Joe replied. "Besides, we'll need all the men we can get. This Joe Colombo character is taking over a lot of territory, and from what I've learned he's moving in on Brooklyn."

The mob was temporarily appeased. As it happened, no black men were added to the mob.

Crazy Joe began running in two directions then. After making his announcement to the mob that he was taking over again and making moves to broaden their operations, he then declared that he was giving up the rackets for good and would devote his time to writing a book. To the initiate that bordered on the ludicrous, because Crazy Joe didn't know a verb from a bottle of horseradish.

However, he impressed some writers, actors and producers who found him more than a little interesting. He spent a lot of time with these new buddies and was seen in several bistros in Manhattan with one or another group of his new friends. The police, however, were not impressed.

Detective Raymond Martin said, "Crazy Joe's declaration that he has reformed is as

phony as a three-dollar bill. That guy will never reform. He's a crook, a hoodlum and a killer. Sooner or later he'll break loose again."

Detective Martin was right.

First, however, Crazy Joe married a stunning brunette divorcée named Sina Essary, on March 18, 1972: The wedding took place at the home of Jerry Orbach and his wife Marta, with whom Gallo was working on a book about his life.

Jerry Orbach is a nice guy and a talented actor. He probably found Crazy Joe more interesting than some of his fellow actors. Certainly, Crazy Joe was more dynamic. However, Orbach's friendship with Crazy Joe proved to be embarassing to him in the light of later events, and not too much later at that, following Crazy Joe's marriage to the beauteous Sina.

In the same week of his marriage, Crazy Joe and two of his hoods, John Cutrone and Frank "Punchie" Illiano, muscled into a Long Island nightclub in which a Joe Colombo capo was a silent partner.

Crazy Joe told the manager, "I want a piece of the action of this joint. Either I get it or I'll rip this place apart and you with it. Got it?"

"Sure, sure, Joey," the thoroughly frightened manager replied, "I'll tell the boys what you said. I'm sure they'll go along."

"You do that little thing. Twenty-four hours. After that, this place comes down around your ears."

The manager called Vincent Aloi, and Aloi called his Godfather, Carlo Gambino. What came out later was that Gambino told Aloi to leave things as they were for the time being. He would straighten it out. There was only one way Gambino had of straightening things out—eliminating the source of the trouble.

On the night of Easter Sunday, April 2, safecrackers struck Ferrara's Pastry Shop, a famous landmark in Manhattan's Little Italy for the past eighty years. The robbers got sixty thousand dollars, more or less. The exact figure was unknown but it was pretty close to that amount.

Ferrara's Pastry Shop and Café is a legitimate, multimillion-dollar business. It is an establishment patronized by schoolkids, housewives, hoodlums and gang bosses. Don Carlo Gambino was one of its cutsomers and held court in the café many times over the years. So, too, did Vincent Aloi and his father. Despite the fact that mobsters frequented the place, it was not considered a hangout

for the hoodlum element. Its reputation was as sweet as the aromas of its pastries.

There was an unwritten law about Ferraras—"Leave it strictly alone. No display of rough stuff of any kind."

The robbery was a highly professional job. On this Easter Sunday, families came in droves after Mass in Old St. Patrick's Cathedral, two blocks away. Other families drove in from the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn and the suburbs. People were waiting for tables and takeout orders, many of them lined up outside the place. The entire staff was so busy they didn't notice a man who ducked into a washroom around six o'clock. He was still there when the café closed shortly after. When everyone was gone, the man opened the rear door and admitted two others.

The three men went into the wood-panaled office at the rear of the café and inserted a telegraph-type key in the electric alarm box on the side of the large steel safe.

They obviously were familiar with the code signal assigned to Ferraras and signalled the Holmes Protection Service that the safe was going to be opened. Holmes signalled back that the message was received, so when the light went on indicating the safe was open, the Holmes people were not alarmed.

The safecrackers used an acetylene torch with a white-hot magnesium bar to cut through two steel doors. At 10:30 P.M. the people at Holmes noticed that the alarm light was still on and signalled the cafe. The signal was answered that all was okay. About an hour later, Holmes again signalled Ferrara's. This time there was no answer. Guards from Holmes and a police cruiser sped to the café. They were too late. The robbers and the weekend receipts were gone.

On Monday morning, Don Carlo Gambino was told of the robbery.

He scowled. "This is bad," Gambino said. "It is a violation of trust. I want to know who did this, if it was people from our organization or outsiders."

Vincent Aloi thought it was someone who knew the inside of Ferrara's thoroughly. "That means it had to be someone within the organization."

"*Find out!*" Gambino ordered.

Several days later, a safecracker named Richard "Hot Fingers" Grossman disappeared from his known Brooklyn haunts.

Gambino learned that Crazy Joe Gallo was involved. Several days later, Gennaro Ciprio, a

Brooklyn restaurateur, was observed talking with Crazy Joe outside Gallo's President Street headquarters. The detectives who saw them noted that Ciprio was extremely excited.

The reason the detectives were present was because they had received word that a contract had been let out on Gallo. It was known that Ciprio did business with Gallo and Grossman. It was also learned that Ciprio, who was well known at Ferrara's, had been there many times during the past two or three weeks.

He spoke to waiters, cooks, the owners, the bakers, and seemed as much interested in the operation of Ferrara's as he was in his own place. Ciprio's made sausages and several other specialties that were sold every year in Little Italy's colorful Feast of San Gennaro. There was no reason why he should have been so deeply interested in the operation of Ferrara's.

All this was reported to Don Carlo Gambino who nodded wisely. The blue chips were all down now for Crazy Joe, Ciprio and Richard Grossman. They had violated an edict, an unwritten law established by Don Carlo Gambino. This was tantamount to heresy in the eyes of Gambino. Violating the tenor and almost sacred atmosphere

ALBERT ANASTASIA

of Ferrara's, making it a victim of robbery, was like robbing the poor box of Old St. Patrick's Cathedral. The perpetrators of this perfidy had to be punished.

FINAL BIRTHDAY

On Thursday, April 6, Crazy Joe Gallo set out to celebrate his 43rd birthday. Crazy Joe, his bride, her ten-year-old daughter by a previous marriage, Crazy Joe's sister, Mrs. Carmella Fiorello, his bodyguard, Peter "Pete The Greek" Diapoulas, and Pete's date, Edith Russo, got into Crazy Joe's Cadillac and drove to

Manhattan to celebrate the occasion at the Copacabana.

It was a festive occasion with champagne flowing all night. The party left the Copa around 3:30 A.M., Friday, and drove downtown to Little Italy for a late snack. Crazy Joe cruised along Mulberry Street until he noticed the brightly lit sign of Umberto's Clam House. It was a new place he had never tried. He stopped in front of the restaurant and parked. The party went inside.

Mulberry Street is usually busy even at that hour but a cold drizzle was falling and the street was all but deserted.

When Crazy Joe's party came into the restaurant, two men who were seated at a table near the front door got up and left. One of them was Joseph "Joe Pesh" Luparelli.

Luparelli was a small-time hood engaged in loan-sharking and running errands for his boss, Joseph "Joe Yack" Yacovelli. Luparelli was aware that a contract had been let out on Crazy Joe. He called Yacovelli and told him that Gallo was in Umberto's restaurant.

Yacovelli shouted, "I want that bastard's head! I want to roll it down President Street like a bowling ball! And that bastard Mooney (a Gallo captain whose right name was John Cutrone), I want to personally peel him like a banana! Get Cisco and Benny and tell them to get that *un Pazzo* (the crazy one)!"

Luparelli found the two brothers and told them what Yacovelli said. They left and returned a short time later with four guns. The two brothers, Luparelli, Sonny Pinto and Pat Fungi drove to Umberto's. It was then around five o'clock in the morning. The Gallo party was still in the restaurant, sitting at two tables in the back of the place.

Cisco and Benny, followed by Sonny Pinto, went into the restaurant, guns drawn. They walked directly to where Crazy Joe and his party were sitting and began to blast away. Three shots struck Crazy Joe in the chest. Pete the Greek ducked under a table but not before a shot caught him in the buttocks.

Crazy Joe screamed epithets at the three gunmen as they raced from the place. He ran after them, blood pouring from his wounds. The women screamed. Gallo got to his car, where he had several guns stashed. He was too far gone, coughing up blood and choking. He leaned against a fender of the car and then slowly collapsed in the gutter, the dirty rainwater mixing with his

blood. He was dead in a gutter, where he had left many of his own victims.

His sister had run out after him, sobbing. "He changed his image," she cried. "That's why this happened."

That wasn't exactly true but she didn't know it. She believed he had decided to turn straight, that he would write a book about his life and live like a decent citizen.

On Monday, April 10, at 2:45 A.M. Gennaro Ciprio left his restaurant, Gennaro's Feast Specialties, in the Bath Beach section of Brooklyn, the section where Al Capone began his career as a hood. As Ciprio emerged from his restaurant, two men came out from the shadows of a doorway, guns in hand.

Ciprio grabbed for his own gun but a hail of bullets cut him down before he could use it. The gunmen got into a car and sped away. When the cops arrived, they found Ciprio dead on the sidewalk, a loaded .38 lying a few feet from his body, and, in his pockets, thirteen hundred dollars in cash.

Later that day, they buried Crazy Joe Gallo in his wedding suit and a five-thousand-dollar casket with a gold nameplate.

That night, the cops found Richard Grossman. He had been badly beaten and shot through both eyes. His body was discovered in the trunk of his car, which had been abandoned in the Sheepshead Bay section of Brooklyn. It was a favorite dumping ground for mob victims, established by the killers of Murder, Inc.

The cops couldn't tie up the Gallo, Ciprio and Grossman murders as being related. It just didn't figure. The word along Mulberry Street was to the effect that the safe at Ferrara's was busted open by Ciprio and Grossman. They were known to have worked together before.

The tie-in between Ciprio, Grossman and Gallo was that Crazy Joe had authorized the cracking of the safe, promising full protection. On the face of it, that assumption was ridiculous, because Gallo in no way could buck the power of Gambino. Detective Martin recalled then that he had seen Ciprio and Gallo talking together. He figured that Gallo's bravado had led him to thumb his nose at Mafia authority, a deadly calculation.

If anything, Gallo should have known that bucking the Sundicate, the Organization, in any way was foolhardy. No one had ever been able to do that. The power of the Syndicate is awesome. It spreads across the width and breadth of the nation

with enforcers in every city ready to move against transgressors. Stay clean and you live to operate whatever is approved for you. Go against it and you die, in the most awful way that fury and vengeance can be meted out.

Sometime in May, police got an unexpected break in the Gallo murder, and the Ciprio and Grossman murders. Joseph Luparelli gave himself up to the FBI in California. He confessed that he had set up the Gallo murder.

Luparelli said, "I was sitting in Umberto's when Crazy Joe and his party came in. I knew about the contract on Joey. I hustled up the street to a joint where a lot of the guys hung out. I found Carmine "Donny Pinto" Dibiase, Phil Gambino (no relation to Don Carlo), and Cisco and Benny. I told them that Crazy Joe was in Umberto's. I phoned Yacovelli and told him Crazy Joe was in Umberto's. He told me to get him. I told him about Cisco and Benny and Sonny Pinto and he said to tell them they had the contract.

"I learned later that the mob wanted to knock me off because I had set up the kill. I beat it to California. That's why I'm here. Unless you give me protection, they'll kill me."

That was the mistake the mob made. Luparelli would not have talked. All they had to do was to give him a piece of action in something and he would have cut off his tongue before spilling his guts. The mob, however, always looks for insurance against possible exposure even then that possibility is remote. In Luparelli's case, it wasn't only remote—it was non-existent.

Federal agents and New York police picked up Phil Gambino, but Sonny Pinto was nowhere to be found. DiBiase, the other member of the group that had been involved in the Gallo murder, also disappeared. DiBiase was a cutie. He was a master at dodging the law. He once disappeared for seven years when he was being sought for the 1951 murder of Angelo Marruci, his "best friend," in a Mulberry Street Club.

During that time he made the "most wanted" list of the FBI and the NYPD. He was finally nabbed, tried and convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to death in the electric chair. He won a reversal of his conviction, was tried a second time and acquitted. An interesting sidelight about DiBiase is that he was Ciprio's godfather!

Crazy Joe Gallo made many mistakes. He assumed he was tough enough to buck the Syn-

dicate. He muscled in on rackets he was told not to. He killed when he should have talked and negotiated. His biggest mistake was trying to buck Carlo Gambino, today, as he has been for many years, the most powerful boss in America. He came by his nickname honestly. He walked in where angels feared to tread and he spat in the face of the devil.

There were more murders after Gallo, Luparelli and Grossman were killed and the operation to destroy all remnants of the Gallo mob was under way. Much of it, according to the best sources of information, was on the orders of Don Carlo Gambino.

True or not, it must be assumed that Don Carlo—surely the shrewdest of Mafia bosses since Lucky Luciano, Johnny Torrio or Al Capone and tougher than Vito Genovese ever dreamed of being—gave orders to destroy those who remained to challenge him as the Capo di tutti Capo not only of New York but of the nation. In retrospect, Crazy Joe Gallo was no more than a hoodlum with ambition, lacking the kind of brains it takes to stay on top against the guns of pretenders.

The bodies fall, here, there, everywhere, from time to time. Taciturn, inscrutable, all-powerful is the man no one can touch, not the hoods who would usurp him or the police authorities who legally have nothing on him—Don Carlo Gambino.

"Crazy" Joe Gallo? Yes, he was crazy. *Requiescat in pacem.*

In the Next Issue—Exclusively Yours—

Two Thrilling New Novelettes

THE GOLDEN BUNGALOW
by SAM MERWIN JR.

The wealth the two old ladies kept in their home looked like easy plucking. But this was a case in which nothing was just as it seemed or as easy as it appeared to be.

DEATH ACROSS THE STREET
by PAULINE C. SMITH

The prosecutor had his suspect nailed to the wall. The only thing against a conviction was his wife's hunch the boy was innocent, a hunch she was impelled to follow up.

THE POINT OF DEATH

by HERBERT HARRIS

Lawford had been given the clue to the killing. But what had been the victim's intended message?

INSPECTOR WILSON and I got to London Airport that morning just in the nick of time . . .

A few minutes later and Johnny Rosewood—wanted for murder—would have been winging across the Channel, headed for the Continent.

When we picked him up, he went to pieces. He was a tangled skein of nerves—a positive wreck for a man still in his twenties.

To make things worse for himself he had grown a moustache and taken to wearing spectacles which we knew he didn't need.

We had been trying to track him down for three days and nights. Johnny Rosewood had known we were looking for him—hence his decision to lie low in the Chelsea flat of his mistress, black-haired model Juanita.

It was only by the merest chance we had come to think of Rosewood as the killer of old Hugo Van Buren. When we got to work on the preliminary facts, we ought to have thought a little harder. But the Yard has to slip up sometimes.

WHEN WILSON and I went down

to Hampstead, we already knew a little about the victim.

The seventy-year-old Van Buren, a great diamond expert, was quite a character. In his rambling Hampstead house, he lived alone, surrounded by heavy old Victorian furniture.

He seldom went out. The only company he had was that of his young men secretaries—and there had been quite a procession of them, working for him for short periods.

His safe always held precious stones, worth anything from 10,000 pounds to 100,000 pounds. Because of this, and because he sometimes had dealings with clients he didn't trust, he kept an old-fashioned revolver, loaded, in a table drawer.

It was this gun—his own gun—which sent a bullet through Van Buren's belly.

But the person who shot him, after a struggle, then slipped away with stones worth about 25,000 pounds, was unaware that the diamond-expert's latest young man secretary was in an upstairs room of the house sleeping off a sick headache.

When Inspector Wilson and I got to the house, this secretary, a fellow named Lawford, seemed only too glad to talk. He was a willowy, over-refined young man, and the sight of his employer spilling blood from the front of his shirt had made him violently sick.

"Mr. Van Buren knew I had a headache and told me to go up and lie on the bed in the spare room," he said. "I took some aspirins. I was about to go off to sleep when I heard the shot."

"You came down at once?"

"Yes, Inspector. The french doors were open. Mr. Van Buren was lying near that desk over there. It looked as if he had crawled towards it from . . . from about where we're standing . . . you can see the trail of blood . . ."

"He was still alive?"

Lawford shuddered. "Only just. He opened his eyes when I bent over him. He tried to speak."

"He said nothing you could understand?"

"No, I'd better explain. Even at normal times he had an impediment in his speech. If he had any sort of violent shock—he told me this himself—he suffered from aphonia."

"Aphonia?" Inspector Wilson frowned.

"Loss of speech," Lawford explained. "As he lay dying he managed to raise himself on one elbow. He tried to say something but it was only a kind of growling noise. Then he pointed . . ."

"Pointed?" Wilson asked.

"At this desk. He pointed at the desk several times, stabbing at it with his finger. Then he fell back and died."

Wilson frowned. "There was something in the desk he wanted to draw attention to—a clue as to the man who shot him?"

Lawford shook his head. "That seemed likely, but I'm sure there's nothing in the desk that could help you."

Wilson said to me: "Have a look in the desk, Sergeant."

I let down the front of the bureau-desk. There were only a few papers in the pigeon-holes. They were tradesmen's bills, household receipts—harmless papers pushed out of sight to keep the room tidy.

"Any secret compartments?" Wilson asked. I gave the desk a thorough "frisking," to no purpose.

Lawford said: "I didn't think you'd find anything there."

"Why, Had you removed something?" Wilson rapped out.

The secretary flushed with anger. "If I'd killed Van Buren and stolen his gems, I would hardly have called the police and waited for you to come!"

"Okay, okay," Wilson said. "You know of nobody who would want to kill Van Buren for a reason other than robbery?"

"No, I've not been with him long. I didn't intend staying either. He wasn't easy to get on with. None of his secretaries stayed very long."

Wilson paced up and down thoughtfully, pausing to study the table in which the gun had been kept and the desk at which the old man had pointed.

"These other secretaries he had . . . They would know he kept diamonds in the safe—they would know the combination?"

"I imagine so."

"And that he kept a gun in this drawer?"

"More than likely."

"Is there any record of the other secretaries he employed—their names and addresses?"

Lawford said: "Yes. There's a file upstairs in a room Van Buren used as an office. Shall I take you up?"

"Please."

We had four addresses in London, and called at each one in turn.

THE FIRST THREE of the ex-secretaries had unbreakable alibis. We were able to rule them out at once.

Our fourth call was a flat near Marble Arch. Johnny Rosewood's place. It was empty—gutted. The caretaker said that Rosewood had cleared out, leaving no address.

It was lucky that Wilson prowled round. Down behind a settee he found a lady's handkerchief with "J" embroidered in one corner.

"That'd be his girl-friend," the caretaker said. "She was always here. A model, I think. Quite a piece. He called her Juanita."

Wilson threw me a look. "Come on," he said. "If we find Juanita . . . maybe we'll find Johnny Rosewood."

She lived in a ground floor flat in Chelsea. It had taken us three days and nights to track her down. She had moved several times, and had probably quit her job of modelling for something more profitable . . .

"I've a hunch this is where Rosewood will be," Wilson said as he rang the bell of her flat.

The door was opened by the brunette herself—a Latin type with a full-blown figure and black hair like a cloud of smoke.

Wilson showed his police card and said grimly: "I want to speak to Johnny Rosewood. We know he's here."

"He's . . ." Her eyes followed the direction of Wilson's glance. A man's trilby lay on a chair near the door.

Then in a voice much too loud, she said: "I'm sorry, but he's out. If you care to wait . . ."

We all heard the window raised in the room beyond the half-open door, and Wilson hurled a look at me.

"Excuse me, Miss . . ."—if his opening gambit was polite, the way he thrust her aside and dashed towards the bedroom was anything but courteous.

Following him, I was in time to see him scramble over the window-sill and drop nimbly into a narrow cobbled alley.

I leaned out and watched him race towards the exit from the alley, but there was no sign of the man who had climbed out first.

I dodged back into the room and went back into the lounge. It was empty. The black-haired Juanita had gone.

It didn't matter all that much, but I called myself all kinds of imbecile. I anticipated without pleasure the rocket I should get from the Inspector, and thought that maybe I wasn't really cut out to be a cop.

Just to make amends I began to turn that flat inside out, and I was glad I did.

When Wilson came back, panting and without Johnny Rosewood, I was able to steer his mind away from the brunette who had also given us the slip.

I had a handful of diamonds —Van Buren's stones— which I had discovered in a tin in the kitchen pantry. I also

showed him a holdall which Rosewood had packed—ready to scram out of it—and a Continental flight-number scribbled on a pad by the model's telephone.

Wilson's eyes glittered. "Come on!" he said.

It didn't take us at all long to reach the airport—and arrest Rosewood.

Later that day, when we got back to the Yard after leaving Rosewood to be booked and processed the Inspector's phone rang.

He sat listening, nodding, biting his lip. Then he said: "Yes . . . yes, thanks . . ."—and put back the receiver.

Looking at me with his mouth buttoned, he said: "That was Lawford. A bright boy. He's been having ideas about that list of secretaries . . . about Van Buren pointing frantically at that desk when he died . . ."

"Well?"

"Trouble with us is we can't see the wood for the perishing trees. Do you know what that desk was made of?"

I shook my head.

"Rosewood!" Wilson yelled.

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BROTHERS AND SISTERS

State schools for delinquent boys and girls all too often graduate criminal types—but they also breed strange loyalties which may counteract lives of crime.

by PAULINE C. SMITH

THE CALIFORNIA Youth Authority puts certain young people away in what is termed Schools, such as Schools for Delinquent Girls and Schools for Delinquent Boys. These schools do fine things. They educate, train and keep the kid under control. What they do not do is create a family within walls, so

the inmates do that on their own.

The girls get ridiculously carried away in this creation business, not only assigning to designate members of their in-cottage peer group the role of Mama, Baby, Sister, Auntie and Niece, but Nephew, Papa and Uncle, not that the latter three are actually male. They are only pretending, exposing another lack in these schools, that of being able to associate with the opposite sex—not even to *see* a member of the opposite sex during the duration of their stay except, of course, for a pastor, a priest, a doctor perhaps, but the girls couldn't quite make it with them. There were those who tried—only to fail.

Of all this role-playing, there is a tacit if non-verbal agreement that the relationship of sister to sister is the closest, the dearest and most steadfast of all. Bertha and Nadine were sisters.

The boys, with practically the same set up—that is, with similar advantages as well as similar lacks—do not embrace the family routine with the same intensity as the girls. The boys take brothers and that is it. A boy and his brother are together, in tune, with the vibes right. *They stick*. These boys are not about to go around calling some big hulk with acne "Mama" or even "Uncle." The boys create brothers only.

It so happened that two such brothers, Gem and Clint, were released from their school about the same time the sisters, Bertha and Nadine, were released from theirs.

Since all four of them, the sisters and the brothers, had come of age during the time of their incarceration, they were not placed in foster homes but sent to a kind of halfway house, there to work for their keep until they could find jobs and make it on their own. Thus Bertha and Nadine met Gem and Clint (no one knew why Gem was called so—Clint said it was because he was a jewel) and the four broke up laughing. That was their humor.

They fell quickly in love, Bertha with Gem and Nadine with Clint, and redoubled their efforts to get outside jobs so that they could make their dream come true, their dream being to marry and live in adjacent apartments. Gem finally landed a job as dishwasher in a spaghetti café and Nadine one in a massage parlor, and they convinced the couple (both of whom were romanticists) who ran the halfway house (which was now overflowing) that they could make it.

So the halfway couple hung a crêpe paper bell from the ceil-

ing of the rec room, called in a parson from a neighboring church and the sisters and brothers were married with dime-store rings and many blessings. Then they managed small across-the-hall apartments in a cheap housing project and were ready to settle down as soon as they got some furniture.

So they went on the *Help Thy Neighbor* TV program, and were so endearing to the watching public that they amassed three refrigerators, four dining room sets and nine beds. After selling all the extras, they prepared to live the responsible life accorded to all free peoples.

For three months or so, they were not only free and responsible, but sublimely happy. The girls, however, being wives as well as sisters, decided it was time they added babies to their family. Bertha thought about it first, sitting around the apartment all day with nothing to do.

After all, eight per cent of California population was now unemployed and she had looked—God knows she had looked—for a job. So she talked it over with Nadine who, being a sister, immediately agreed. Even though her massage job *was* interesting, still the creation of additional family was almost instinctive—perhaps, more aptly, indigenous to her many months in the Girls' School, where the creation of family was a necessity.

The boys were appalled at the suggestion, they being so content with being brothers that even the addition of wives had seemed a redundancy. The baby idea was just too much.

'She's workin'," cried Clint, pointing at his wife, Nadine, "and I ain't." By the time the boys were apprised of the girls' decision to create more family, the California unemployment figure had risen to 8.5%. "And if she has a baby, she can't work no more and then where'll we be?"

That was a thought.

All four studied the problem and the boys came up with the natural solution that they do a little burglary for a living. "It'd pay better, that's for sure," said Clint.

"And I'm turned off of washin' dried spachetti off dishes," added Gem. "How about we rip off the café first?"

The girls listened and concurred. So Gem kept his eyes open—discovered where the spaghetti café owner stashed his cash before taking it to the bank, which was not in a safe but in a small strong box hidden behind the spices—quit his job with the excuse that he had been offered a better one, and

he and Clint ripped off the place about twelve o'clock on a Sunday night.

They bought a used car with the seven-hundred dollars profit from the job and Gem, the jewel, whose facets were bright enough to know he would be an immediate and prime suspect, went to work as busboy in a pizza palace.

"I'm clean," he cried when fingered by the police. "Golly, I'm goin' straight. All I did was change jobs. Can I help it if the joint was ripped off right after I left?"

The police decided he couldn't help it and the heat was off.

Buoyed by their initial success, the brothers threw themselves into a modest new career. Gem worked a split shift at the pizza palace, which offered a couple of afternoon hours for holding up (with toy guns or a fist in the pocket) out-of-the-way doughnut shops and family type grocery stores and a couple of night hours for liquor stores and pedestrians.

The program worked very well, each member of the foursome assigned to special duty. Bertha, unemployed, kept the apartments sketchily clean and warmed up the pizzas brought home from the palace each day for her sister and the hungry brothers. Clint, also unemployed, tuned up the car and drove about the city looking for likely places to hit.

It was a busy and reasonably exciting life, yet no one was satisfied—the boys because what they were picking up was peanuts. They wanted to get into the big time and work with real guns and ski masks and knock over banks. They took to watching how-to crime movies on television and drawing plans on graph paper. The girls wanted babies and began to read the women's magazines and whisper together.

It was during this period of rather static discontent that both girls became pregnant.

"Now why did you go and do that for?" complained the boys.

Bertha fretted over all the work entailed in keeping two apartments picked up in her condition and Nadine was suffering morning sickness in the massage parlor. So Nadine quit, the girls kept the apartments halfway picked up together and were happy.

"No more stealing," they ordered the boys in their new-found madonna state. With doe eyes, they explained how now that they were making families, honest-to-god, legitimate, real-life families, all the good rules must be observed.

The boys, unaccustomed to a code of ethical faith that extends beyond loyalty of brother

to brother, were not only distressed and confused, but had a sneaky feeling that they were being unjustly used. Gem's sense of injustice was naturally the greater since he was the only member of the foursome now legitimately employed.

"Hey!" he cried, "I'm the only one bringin' in the bread, and that ain't fair."

Clint, his brother, agreed as to the inequity of the situation, remembered that he could carry a tune and applied at Gem's pizza palace, donned a straw hat and became a singing waiter.

Which was exactly the way the girls wanted it. Now they could lie about mornings in one apartment or the other, discussing boys' names and girls' names, throwing up now and then—and, during the afternoons, buying booties in the neighborhood dime store. They even visited the Girls' School to see their old friends, the Aunties, the Papas and the Uncles, but not the babies or even the nieces and nephews, because they were producing their own.

Clint sang and carried pizzas while Gem cleared the tables, both feeling this was not their bag. Being brothers, they decided to do something about it—together. So, during their off-hours, they went back to watching television in one apartment or the other, catching all the crime shows and private-eye movies in order to educate themselves.

"We can do it," Gem declared. Clint replied, "All we got to do is latch onto a couple of gats and get back to the paper work."

"I want to get out of that heavy-platter pizza palace," said Gem.

"And I got to knock off the warblin'," his brother agreed.

The girls, waddling about, healthy as cherubs, did not notice the boys' preoccupation with TV and pencil. They were too busy reading the women's magazines, learning to knit and making up names.

"Okay, I've got it," breathed Nadine, awed by her own inspiration, "if it's a boy, I'll name it Burthon, and if a girl, I'll name it Berthina."

Bertha clasped her in grateful arms, whispering her own selections—Nadan if a boy or Nadette for a girl. As they contemplated a sisterhood or brotherhood or sister-brotherhood unto the second generation, the girls did not discuss their nomenclature plans with the babies' fathers, who were not truly kin.

Similarly, the boys did not discuss their big-job plans with the girls, who were only wives after all, not brothers. The boys

were busy casing banks, buying handguns from pawnshops under assumed names and ski masks at sporting goods houses. They were busy at one television set or the other, always together, each with a pad of graph paper and a finely-pointed pencil, executing charts of entry, charts of departure, all very well done, Gem having been educated in the rudiments of draftsmanship at the School and Clint having a natural flair for schematic drawing.

They selected an all-day bank, one that did not close its doors until 5:30, so that they could conveniently pull the job after their first shift, arriving there at 4:15—a dead time as they had ascertained—park the car in an adjacent lot, jump the low wall, slip on their ski masks at the rear door and enter with aimed gats. They shook hands many times as they finalized and wrote down their plans so that they would not forget even one step—like in the movies.

They visited and revisited the bank they had chosen and wrote and drew and rewrote and redrew their plans many times, entering the date, the time, marking in X's for themselves and their positions. The memorized their M.O., shaking hands as each became letter-perfect. Since the girls never thoroughly cleaned the apartments, they hid their guns and ski masks carelessly until the Big Day when each slipped his gun in his belt, folded his ski mask and wedged it into a hip pocket, fastened his jacket and took off for work together.

The girls spent the early part of that afternoon reading women's magazines and sharing their motherhood, babyhood information. Bertha sat up straight and cried, *"Nadine!"*

Struggling from her chair, Nadine reached her sister, hands fluttering, "Have you got a pain, Bertha?"

"Not yet," answered Bertha, "but look at this place."

Nadine obediently looked at the apartment, which was a mess. "What's wrong with it?" she asked.

"It's dirty, that's what. This article . . . Bertha tapped the page. "It says, 'a baby's surroundings must be clean, clean, clean." Nadine, your apartment is as bad as this one. That's what we've got to do, clean up these places. What if the babies should arrive early, then what? Are we going to bring them into pig sties?"

"No!" replied Nadine and lumbered off to her own apartment while Bertha got out the Lysol and rags. The girls, being sisters and thinking very much alike, both started in their

kitchens and then in their bathrooms and did not reach their combination sitting-bedrooms until 3:30, at which time each, in clearing the tables before their TV sets of a number of empty beer cans, came across charts indicating place, date, time, point of entry, position of car, "ski masks" printed at a spot called, "back door," and "guns" printed at a spot called, "inside back door," and all those X's leading to what was called, "money pens." It could mean only one thing.

It took Bertha and Nadine fifteen minutes before they understood what it was they were looking at. Then they called out simultaneously through their open apartment doors, one to the other, "Do you know what I found?" They met in the hall, each carrying an identical sheaf of graph paper.

They discussed the situation for ten more minutes in the hallway, consulted their watches and, with understandable family loyalty, clattered down the stairs and to the corner drug store. The telephone booth was not large enough to hold both, so Bertha wedged herself inside as she instructed Nadine, in the folding doorway, what to look up and how to find it in the telephone book.

They then discovered they had no money and Nadine, with the decisive speed of a spider who consumes her mate the moment the family is created, trotted awkwardly to the drug counter and offered her watch as security for the loan of a dime while Bertha pleaded loudly from the phone booth that she hurry.

The number was dialled, the message relayed and the boys apprehended at the precise moment, 4:15, they were fitting on ski masks at the rear door of the all-day bank.

"We done good," sister assured sister loyally.

Two months later, happily side by side in the maternity hospital, the girls graciously received their rewards, which tided them over until Berthine and Nadan were six months old, at which time they doubled up in a larger apartment and went on welfare.

Occasionally, they visit the prison—but not too often. After all, the boys are in-laws only—not really family. To each girl, her family is a sister and a baby, plus a nephew for one and a niece for the other—as it neatly worked out.

SAFE ALIBI

by FRANK BURY

Blackmailers, like leeches, can bleed you even when killed . . .

CHARLTON KNEW he should have been feeling happy, relaxed, on top of the world.

His father-in-law had hinted at a new appointment which would bring him nearer and nearer to the top of the tree. If he played his cards right he'd eventually have enough money of his own to get rid of his rich but cold-blooded debutante-wife and her patronizing father.

Meanwhile, though, they were important to him. He knew that he had only to put a foot wrong, and they'd stamp on him as ruthlessly as if he were a black beetle.

Hooley knew it too. And that wasn't all that Hooley knew. The latter was waiting for him as usual in the squalid Soho café. The mere prospect of meeting him made Charlton feel sick. Not only sick but wor-

ried, because he knew the price of silence would have gone up; it went up all the time.

"I've not got a hundred," Charlton said, eyeing the shifty-eyed little rat with loathing. "You can have thirty now, the rest later. . . ."

Hooley sneered. "You're short again? That's too bad. You'll just have to try and worm a bit more out of that rich missus of yours, eh?"

Charlton gritted his teeth. He wanted to close his fingers round the little vermin's scrawny neck. "Still," Hooley was saying, "I'll take the thirty. Give you a week to find the other seventy. . ."

Hooley rose, smiling. "Ring me when you've got it. If you don't . . . well, one whisper about a very serious indiscretion of a few years ago . . . a small matter which has been brushed under the carpet . . . and that rich deb you married, not to mention her influential papa, will leave you flatter than a bedspread. . ."

Watching Hooley go, Charlton knew he was trapped three ways—by an episode of his past which, if dragged into the open, could wreck his whole future; by the filthy ex-jailbird whose silence he would have to go on buying at a higher and higher price; by his wife, Fiona, whose money and position were the only qualities she possessed that were vital to him. . .

Hooley, of course, would have to die. Nobody would care. He had been a crook since the time he could walk, with innumerable sentences behind him for housebreaking. But blackmail was easier, more profitable.

Charlton knew he would have no qualms about killing him. In the Far East, as a Commando mopping up rebels, he had killed many men he had never seen before. They had been fairground targets, and he perfected his prowess with a revolver on them, putting a bullet between their eyes.

The thought of shooting Hooley made him glow inwardly.

Fiona was away and he was alone in the house when he rang the blackmailer. "You can have the rest of the money now."

"Tonight?"—the blackmailer sounded greedy, eager.

"Yes—come and get it."

"You mean call at your house? You always asked me not to."

"It's all right. Fiona's away. I'm alone. It's dark, so you won't be seen. If you want the money, come and fetch it."

BECAUSE he hadn't been asked to the house before. Hooley was vaguely uneasy when his host

ushered him in. He walked quickly past Charlton and into the study of the big old house.

Here he contrived to keep his distance from Charlton, and drew comfort from the bulge in his right-hand pocket. He disliked using a gun and hadn't carried one for a long time, but if Charlton tried anything...

"I've got your money upstairs," Charlton said. "I'll get it."

Hooley watched suspiciously as his host walked up the stairs that led from the study to a gallery. When he had gone from view, Hooley looked at the french doors behind him. He undid the catch and opened the doors and placed himself in front of them. It would save time if he had to make a quick getaway.

He still had his back to the doors that led into the garden when Charlton reappeared on the gallery above the room.

Charlton paused. The two men eyed each other, one with cold murder in his heart, the other in an icy grip of fearful premonition.

Hooley had no chance to draw his gun. As his hand went to his pocket, Charlton fired. A bullet struck the blackmailer with deadly accuracy in the center of the forehead.

Charlton smiled. He had not lost that sure touch. But there was no time for self-flattery. He had to work fast. There mustn't be any blood where Hooley had fallen....

He hurried down and swiftly dragged the body across to the safe which stood against the study wall.

Sweating, he turned the dial of the safe, heard the combination-click, and opened the safe door. From under a heap of documents he withdrew the box in which Fiona kept her most expensive jewels, and, opening the box, stood it on the carpet in front of the safe.

He took a few large pieces from the box and put them in one of Hooley's pockets. Then he propped the body in front of the open safe in a semi-kneeling position, the bullet-shattered face staring up at the staircase.

Charlton looked at the french doors. He had been going to open them himself, but Hooley had done it for him. But there was something else. He stepped outside pushed one door closed, and, wrapping a handkerchief round his knuckles, rammed it against a small pane near the door-catch. The glass tinkled on the floor inside the room.

Some glass was on the corner of the small mat on top of the carpet. The mat also bore traces of blood. Hell, he'd almost missed that!

He took the mat out on to the garden terrace. Somebody was ringing the bell on the front door, turning his blood to ice.

Hastily he dropped the mat behind a stack of deck-chairs. Tomorrow, he thought, he would have to remember to burn the mat. He braced himself and went to answer the door.

It was the nosey old Mrs. Ferraby from next door, and Charlton cursed inwardly.

"Is everything all right. Mr. Charlton? I could have sworn I heard a gun go off a little while ago. . ."

"Yes . . . yes, you're right. I've been visited by a burglar. Mrs. Ferraby. But it's all right. I . . . I'm just going to ring the police."

He was surprised by the calmness of his own voice, by the steadiness of his hand as he dialled 999. . . .

And within minutes the police were there. He was glad they had not kept him waiting.

INSPECTOR LAKE looked at the dead man who lay in front of the safe. "Well, it's a familiar mug all right," he remarked to Sergeant Pinner. "You remember him, of course?"

The young Sergeant swallowed and hesitated.

"It's Hooley," Lake told him. "He's been in and out of jail plenty of times for this kind of job. His speciality. Haven't run across him lately, though, have we, Sergeant?"

The Inspector then turned to Charlton. "Now, sir . . . what happened exactly?"

"Well, when I got home." Charlton explained. "I could see the light at the back from the study. I knew my wife was away. I crept along the side of the house, and peeped through that small window over there by the fireplace.

"I could see the glass broken in the french window, and the door open, Inspector, and then this man busy at work on the safe. So I entered the house as quietly as possible and crept upstairs by another staircase at the back. . .

"I got out my revolver—the one I had when I was on service overseas, and which I kept for just such a situation as this —and I crept out on to that gallery up there. The chap must have heard me, or perhaps his instinct told him that I was there. . .

"He had the safe open, and the jewel box was open too. He seemed to swivel round suddenly on his knees, and then he was facing me. I saw the fellow's hand dart to his pocket, and I guessed that he had a gun there. Well, it was this chap or me, Inspector. I had to

decide quickly. I . . . I just fired. . ."

"You're a very accurate shot, aren't you?" Inspector Lake commented drily.

"Yes, I'm a crack shot. I won trophies. When I fired out East. Inspector, I usually aimed for the forehead. I didn't always hit the target. This time the shot was dead lucky."

"But not for Hooley. You fired just the one shot?"

"It was all that was necessary."

"Quite." Lake got down on his knees, and studiously examined the dead man, the jewel-box, the contents of the safe, the safe itself. He was very still and thoughtful, tugging at the lobe of his car.

Then he rose and walked to the french doors. He studied the broken glass, then the floor very carefully.

"What happened to the mat that was here?" he asked.

"Mat?"—Charlton swallowed painfully.

"There must have been a mat here—the carpet is less faded where the mat's been."

"I . . . I'm afraid I don't know."

The Inspector strolled out on to the terrace. He looked carefully at a canvas club chair, and then vanished from sight for a few moments. Presently he returned, carrying the doormat which Charlton had slipped behind some chairs.

"The mat," he said to Charlton, and laid it with studied care on the floor. Then he turned to Sergeant Pinner.

"Sarge go and take a look at that canvas chair on the terrace. There's a hole in it that looks like a bullet hole. If it is, you might find the bullet. . ."

Lake looked at Charlton, noting the reaction. The latter's face had become even more pale and strained. "You did say that you only fired one shot?"

"Hooley was kneeling here in front of the open safe, with his back to it. You were standing on the gallery up there. You hit him in the forehead." He paused. "Did you realise that the bullet had come out of the nape of his neck?"

"No, of course I didn't."

"The average person, Mr. Charlton, seeing a man with Hooley's record shot dead in front of a safe, with half the loot in his pocket, would make a pretty safe assumption . . . if you'll pardon the pun. . .

"But to the enquiring mind . . . like mine . . . there was a rather queer feature. Judged by the angle your bullet entered his forehead, and seeing it re-emerged where it did . . . well, the bullet should have lodged in the safe. . .

(Continued on Page 128)

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THE RUNNING MAN

She never lied, but no one would believe her — and a man's life depended on her finding the truth.

by EVELYN PAYNE

HER CAPACIOUS handbag tucked under one arm, the other hand carrying a sack holding a carton of milk, Aurelia Hacker strode along briskly. She was tall and plain and dowdy, not a person to look at twice. But in Haddonville people did look at her—she was considered a character, the woman who would not lie.

In fact, she was known to have risked her life once to prove that she was telling the truth. Not for her the polite fib or the tactful evasion.

She didn't permit her clothes to lie for her either. There was no frill on the gray dress to mitigate the boniness of her figure, no tinge of powder to

hide the length of her nose. Her graying hair was twisted into a bun and the hat on top was simply a plain hat and nothing more to be said.

She had worked late at the office and was planning to take a shortcut through the park on her way home. It was the dinner hour and beginning dusk, and the streets were almost deserted.

When she reached the end of the sidewalk cater-cornered from the park the traffic light turned red and she stopped obediently and waited. A young woman, coming from her right, walked quickly up to the corner and started across on the green. She had her arms full of packages and her head half turned, watching something, when the car came speeding through the red light.

There was a terrible thud, a dreadful, interrupted shriek, a bundle of clothes flying through the air, another thud as the bundle landed in the street and lay still.

For a second or two Aurelia was immobilized by shock. She saw the door of the still moving car open and a tall young man jump out and run away. She was sure it was a young man or a large boy—he looked muscular and ran lithely—and that it was masculine, although these days they all seemed to look alike, because she caught a glimpse of a beard.

A car screeched to a stop on the other side of the street and a man got out and started chasing the fleeing driver, yelling, "Hey, you, come back." But he didn't go far, not even all the way across the intersection. The criminal outdistanced him and vanished into the shadows of the park.

The man returned, panting, to where Aurelia knelt beside the body on the pavement. It looked bloody and horribly squashed, and she found herself fighting nausea.

"My God," said the man and gulped.

Aurelia said hurriedly, "Why don't you go call an ambulance?"

He rushed off to the nearest house. The murder car, stalled, stood quietly in the middle of the intersection. It was a middle-aged Ford, fairly well kept. One headlight was broken and the fender crumpled from the impact.

The man returned. "I called the police. My God, that was awful. He went right through that light, didn't even try to stop. Must have been drunk or hopped up on something. Didn't even have his lights on."

Aurelia shuddered, rose and went to retrieve her bag and the cardboard carton which she

had dropped. Then she stood there, dusting at her skirt and trying to pull herself together.

People had begun to gather by the time the ambulance and the police arrived. Barney Wilkins, chief of police, pursing his fat lips importantly, gave directions to his men and then came over to where Aurelia and the man stood. One of his men took pictures, and then the ambulance departed with its sad burden. A wrecker arrived to take away the car.

"Hi, Aurelia, you see it happen?" Barney asked, and she nodded. He turned to the man, "You're—goldarn it, I can't think of your name—"

"Kelly Anneston, vice president of Moffat and Skey," said the man confidently. "I saw it all. Hell, he didn't even try to slow down, just sailed right through the red light, and then after he hit her he got out and ran. I chased him, but—"

"That right, Aurelia?"

"Yes," she said precisely, "That's what happened."

"You get a good look at the guy?" Barney continued.

"Young, dark haired, a beard. He wore a white T shirt, torn on one shoulder, jeans," she enumerated accurately. "But I couldn't see his face, just one cheek. The beard."

"Probably that Parkins kid—he's high on something about half the time. His pa's been getting him off on things, but this time we got him for sure," Barney said.

Kelly Anneston shook his head. "I know who it was. I recognized him."

"You did?" Barney almost squeaked with excitement. "Who was it?"

Anneston shook his head sadly, "I'm afraid it was my cousin, Talbot."

"Why, that wasn't Talbot," Aurelia exclaimed. "I know him. Oh, it may have looked a little like him with the beard and general dimensions, but it wasn't Talbot. I'm sure of that."

"I'm sorry. I hate like hell to say it, but it was Tal," Anneston insisted. "I saw his face. He looked my way, and I had my headlights on. I—I wish I could say it wasn't. Hell, we grew up together. I was an orphan, and his family took me in when I was about twelve and raised me. I—I can't imagine how Tal could have done such a thing. He must have been stoned or something——"

Aurelia took a good look at Kelly Anneston. He was young too, about Talbot's age, maybe twenty-nine or so, tall and sort of stringy with hot dark eyes under jutting brows. She didn't like him much, but she had to admit that he had acted correctly. A man is bound to give

the name of a criminal if he knows it—or thinks he does.

"Have you seen much of Talbot lately, Mr. Anneston?" she asked.

"Our interests are different. He spends his spare time painting, takes lessons at night, that sort of thing," he told her.

"You know whether he takes drugs or anything?" Barney Wilkins inquired.

Anneston shook his head, but there was an odd look on his face, as if he might suspect something, but didn't want to say so.

One of the policemen came up just then. "That's Anneston's car, all right. Seems like he called in about six fifteen to report that the car had been stolen."

"Clever of him," said the chief savagely, wiggling his heavy brows. "He hit that woman about quarter to, didn't he?"

"That was not Talbot in that car," Aurelia repeated. "I'm positive, and I saw it all."

"I know you always tell the truth, Aurelia," snapped Wilkins irritatedly, "but that don't make what you think you saw a fact."

She started to say something more, but she saw Anneston wink at Chief Wilkins and the chief wink back. Humoring an old woman, she thought with fury. Well, let them wait and see.

They went to the police station to make their depositions, and Aurelia, before she signed her name, wrote in, *It was not Talbot Anneston*, much to Barney's irritation. But she said flatly, "I won't sign anything else. I dictated that and you left it off, and I won't sign it unless it's there."

Back in her apartment she heated up some canned stew, ate it quickly, washed the dishes, and then went into the livingroom and sat there, her spine well clear of the chair back, and thought. Why was she still so sure that it had not been Talbot?

He had worked for a few months at the real estate firm where she was secretary and general all around prop, and she had liked him then, his courteous quiet manner and the fact that he had listened to her.

Whether he had paid any attention to what she said later on, she didn't know, but he *had* listened. However, he'd been too shy and introverted to make a good salesman and he'd finally left and taken a job somewhere else.

"Maybe," she told herself, "it's just that I don't like the idea of his acting that way, killing that woman, proving me wrong in what I thought about

him. As Barney said, a man should know his own cousin."

But the feeling persisted.

The morning paper had big headlines: ALLEGED HITRUN DRIVER CAUGHT. Despite the allegeds and other such hedges in the account, it was very clear that the *Courier* felt there was no doubt about Talbot Anneston's guilt. The fact that he was a Vietnam veteran, who had been wounded and even won a couple of medals, merely suggested to the paper that you could never tell about veterans.

Kelly Anneston was to be congratulated on his quick recognition and his public spiritedness. Aurelia was not mentioned by name, only as "another witness" who, it was implied, backed up the identification.

And there were pictures. Of Mrs. May Smith, married and the mother of a six year old girl, dead on arrival at the hospital. Talbot Anneston, cleanshaven (Aurelia almost didn't recognize him) and Veronica Rush, his fiancee, a very pretty girl.

Veronica had denied emphatically that it could have been Talbot. "Why, I was talking to him on the phone at six, and he told me then that his car had been stolen."

Usually Aurelia disliked Saturdays, when she didn't have to go to the office, which was her main interest and purpose in life, but today she was glad that she was free. She put on another of her utilitarian garments and the battered black hat and went to see Veronica, who was still pretty even though her gray eyes were swollen and red with weeping.

Aurelia went straight to the point. "I saw the accident last night, and I'm positive that it was not Talbot who drove that car."

The girl's face lit up. "Oh, Miss Hacker, thank goodness. It just couldn't have been Tal. I told Barney I was talking to him on the phone at six, but he didn't believe me. He thinks I'm lying."

"Barney's inclined to believe what he wants to, and in this case he doesn't believe me either," Aurelia said drily. "Is there any reason why Kelly would deliberately lie?"

Veronica looked startled. After a minute she said, "Oh, I can't believe that Kelly would be so mean. But I did go with him for awhile, and he was pretty mad when we broke up and I started going with Tal. But, really, Miss Hacker, I think he just must have made a mistake."

"When did Talbot shave off his beard and why?" Aurelia asked after a pause.

"Why, yesterday morning. We talked it over the night before, and I didn't much like the beard, so he decided to get rid of it. But he can't prove that either, and Barney insists that he came home and shaved it off after the accident."

BEFORE SHE went any more deeply into things Aurelia decided it might be well to see what the situation was. She went home and phoned Barney Wilkins. He was gruff.

"I tell you, Aurelia, that for once in your life you're wrong. I know you never lie, but that don't mean you can't be wrong. Yesterday was Anneston's day off, and he says he spent the day home painting. But maybe he was smoking a little pot on the side or something. He coulda run through that park and got home in time to call about his car being stolen."

"You can't have it both ways," she argued. "If he was so hopped up that he could run over that woman, it's unlikely that he'd be careful enough to phone about his car, wouldn't it?"

"Running over that woman scared the pants offa him, sobered him up. He phoned about the car and shaved off his beard because he was scared, and he had just about enough time to do that before we arrested him. If you get any other ideas, Aurelia, tell them to his lawyer," the Chief said and slammed down the phone.

The doorbell rang. When she opened it she saw a little girl in the green Girl Scout uniform, who asked politely, "Would you like to order some Girl Scout cookies, lady?"

Of course! Yesterday had been some kind of school holiday, and the Girl Scouts and Brownies would have been around taking orders for

cookies. Maybe one of them had seen Talbot during the day.

Barney Wilkins wouldn't be bothered with taking any evidence, especially from children. He had five of his own, who all said openly that they hated their father.

"Cookies, lady?" the little girl persisted.

"Why, yes, I would like some. Four boxes."

The child went off delighted, and Aurelia put on her old hat, debated about whether the clouds that were piling up meant rain any time soon, and finally walked over to the block where Talbot Anneston lived.

He had one side of a duplex, with a nicely trimmed yard. There was no answer on the other side, so Aurelia went on to the next house. She rang the bell, and a plump young woman came to the door. "Yes?"

"I am Aurelia Hacker. I saw that accident last night, and I am sure that it was not Talbot Anneston who killed that woman," she said immediately.

"But his cousin said——" the woman objected flutteringly.

"His cousin was mistaken. I know," said Aurelia in the same flat tone she used for announcing interest rates. It carried conviction, just as it always did. The young woman opened the door, saying, "Come in. I'm Louise Broom. I really couldn't believe that nice young man could do a thing like that. Only, of course, an artist——That's what I told the policeman this morning. He wanted to know if I had seen Mr. Anneston about six o'clock last night, but I didn't. We were having supper."

"Did you see him earlier in the day?"

Louise Broom nodded. "About nine o'clock yesterday morning. I saw him drive up in his car. I guess he'd been to the grocery store—he was carrying a couple of sacks."

"Did he still have on his beard?" Aurelia continued.

The woman stared. "Why, yes, I don't think I'd have recognized him otherwise. I hardly recognized the picture in the paper this morning."

"Veronica, his fiancee, says he shaved it off about eleven yesterday morning. The police think he did it after he got home after the accident."

The door opened, and a little girl, about ten, came in. "Hi, Mommy, I got some more orders for cookies. Eight boxes. That's more than——"

"This is my daughter, Rose," Mrs. Broom said pridefully. Ordinarily Aurelia was allergic to proud mothers, but in this case she didn't blame the woman. The child was beautiful and in-

telligent looking. "This is Miss Hacker, dear."

"Hi," said Rose, staring unabashed.

"Hello, Rose. Did you sell any cookies to Mr. Annest——" Aurelia began.

"You are not going to question my daughter," Mrs. Broom interrupted angrily. "I haven't even told her——"

Rose laughed. "Oh, I know all about Mr. Anneston's being arrested for killing somebody. You threw the paper out, but I read all about it over at Lucy's house."

"Mr. Anneston didn't kill anybody," Aurelia stated. "And I am trying to prove it. Did you sell him any cookies yesterday?"

Mrs. Broom was fluttering her hands anxiously, but her daughter paid no attention. Rose said, "I sold him two boxes. And, gee, he sure looked funny when he came to the door. He had shaving soap all over one side of his face on top of the beard, and the other side was all shaved off."

"If your mother will let you, will you tell that to the police, Rose?" Aurelia asked, thrilled at this corroboration of Talbot Anneston's innocence.

Mrs. Broom stood up then and pulled the child to her. Her face was red with anger. "Oh, no, you don't. You're not going to traumatize my child defending a murder——"

"He is not a murderer, Mrs. Broom," Aurelia said crisply, rising. "You let her go to Girl Scout meetings, but you won't let her tell the truth, do her bit for justice, although I'm sure you talk to her a lot about it, don't you?"

Rose pulled herself free. "I'd like to go Mommy. I'd like to go and tell them, the police, that I saw Mr. Anneston shaving his beard off yesterday morning. It was right before lunch, Mama, when you were fixing the sandwiches."

Aurelia left it at that—Mrs. Broom still uncertain, Rose very determined. She was sure that Mrs. Broom would be on the phone to her husband in the next five minutes.

When she got home she thought about phoning Barney and decided against it. That would be something for the lawyer to use, but in the meantime there must be something she could do to establish the fact that it had not been Talbot so that it would never have to come to trial.

There were several opposing factors to be considered. The first one was that as vice president of Moffat and Skey, Stockbrokers, Kelly Anneston was a fairly important person. Talbot, on the other hand, had a small

job somewhere. Moreover, he had artistic leanings, and Barney was very skeptical about artistic leanings. Finally she herself had proved Barney wrong once before in a murder case, and he hadn't forgotten it. He would love to prove her wrong.

So it was up to her to do something drastic. If only she could remember why she was so sure that it had not been Talbot in that car last night, something besides just her feeling.

She went back to the night before and thought over the whole thing, beginning with her arrival at the corner.

The light changing, the woman coming along and starting across on the green, the car speeding through and hitting her, the young man jumping out and running toward the park.

She let her mind dwell at length on the mental picture of that running figure, and suddenly she knew.

"That's it," she said, opening her eyes. "That's why I knew it wasn't Talbot——"

She sat there a moment longer, thinking. If she just told this to Barney, he probably wouldn't believe her or wouldn't listen. She would have to get it out of Kelly Anneston, make him tell the truth, and that meant going to his apartment right now, before he went out to dinner—he was a bachelor and she doubted if he did much cooking. But first, she had to get hold of Barney Wilkins. She called the police station and was told that he was home. So she called there and was fortunate enough to have him answer the phone.

"Barney, this is Aurelia," she began.

"Now, look, I told you to talk to the lawyer——" he interrupted angrily.

"I just wanted to tell you that I am going to Kelly's apartment now to force the truth out of him. He lied, and I can prove it," she said positively. "If you want to hear it, you'd better come over there."

"Hell, no, you've got a bee in your bonnet again——"

"He's making a fool of you, Barney. I know," she said and hung up.

Aurelia looked out, saw that the early clouds were now producing rain, and went to the hall closet and got her rubbers and her umbrella. She put on her hat again and a coat and started out to walk the six blocks to Kelly Anneston's apartment.

It was an expensive looking apartment building, but there was no doorman—Haddonville had not yet reached that pinna-

cle of luxury. She went inside, looked at the mailboxes, and marched down the carpeted hall to Number Four and rang the bell.

After a moment or two the door opened, and Kelly Anneston looked out. When he saw who it was, he started to swing the door closed, but she put her foot on the sill.

"Well, what the hell do you want?" he demanded disagreeably, looking down at her foot.

"I want to come in and talk to you, Mr. Anneston."

"There's nothing to talk about."

"Oh, I think there is, such as why you deliberately lied to the police about your cousin," she said coolly.

He was silent a moment and then he opened the door wider and said with a peculiar smile, "Come in then, if you must."

She shut her umbrella and walked in and turned to face him.

"You're claiming that I lied?" he asked, lighting a cigarette.

"I know you did," she replied calmly. "I don't know why, but probably because Talbot took Veronica away from you. And I know when you decided to do it."

"Did your crystal ball tell you that, you old witch?" he was heavily sarcastic.

"When you stopped running after that man. You could have caught him, if you'd tried," she went on, watching him as he moved about the room. He was a lot bigger than she had thought, she realized.

He shook his head, "He was too fast. I'm not in that good condition."

"Nonsense. You're a well muscled young man with long legs, but you suddenly realized that the description fitted your cousin and you stopped and came back. You knew perfectly well that it wasn't Talbot."

"You're crazy, you old bitch. That was Tal, it was, it was!"

He took a step toward her, his eyes fiery.

"You knew it wasn't because that man was barefoot, and you know perfectly well that Talbot has to wear a special shoe since part of his foot was shot away in Vietnam," she pointed out, watching him closely.

"Veronica was mine and he's not going to have her. When you're dead, you old fool, nobody will know the difference," he said thickly and sprang at her, his big hands closing around her throat.

She was gasping and spots were coming in front of her eyes, and she almost panicked. But Aurelia was a strong woman and she had a strong will. She still had the umbrella in her right hand and she

jabbed as hard as she could in his direction.

There was a howl of pain and the hands left her throat and Kelly was collapsing all doubled up. Aurelia staggered back and fell into a chair, gasping.

Just then the door burst open. It was Barney Wilkins and another policeman.

"You all right Aurelia?" he asked, and looking around, "What in the hell did you do to him?"

She lifted the umbrella and Chief Wilkins grinned appreciatively. Then she managed to croak, "You heard?"

"Yeah, I heard," Barney said angrily. He turned to the recumbent Kelly. "You goddamned, lowdown son of a no good—"

He stopped and glanced at Aurelia.

"Go right ahead," Aurelia whispered. "Don't mind me at all!"

SAFE ALIBI

by FRANK BURY

(Concluded from Page 116)

"And it didn't, Mr. Charlton. It seems to have made a few right-angle turns before leaving by the french-doors and holding a canvas chair, maybe shedding some blood on its way out . . . on the mat. . . ."

Lake smiled. "If you'd found the bullet and stuck it in the safe, it might have made all the difference. Almost a safe alibi. Only you didn't think of it."

Charlton made a sudden lunge for the gun he had left lying on a table, but the Inspector's foot shot out like a snake's tongue and Charlton fell flat on his face.

"Sorry," the Inspector said, "but you're much too good a shot." He picked up the gun. "Okay, Sarge, help Mr. Charlton up, and we'll all take a little ride."

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